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A Portentous History

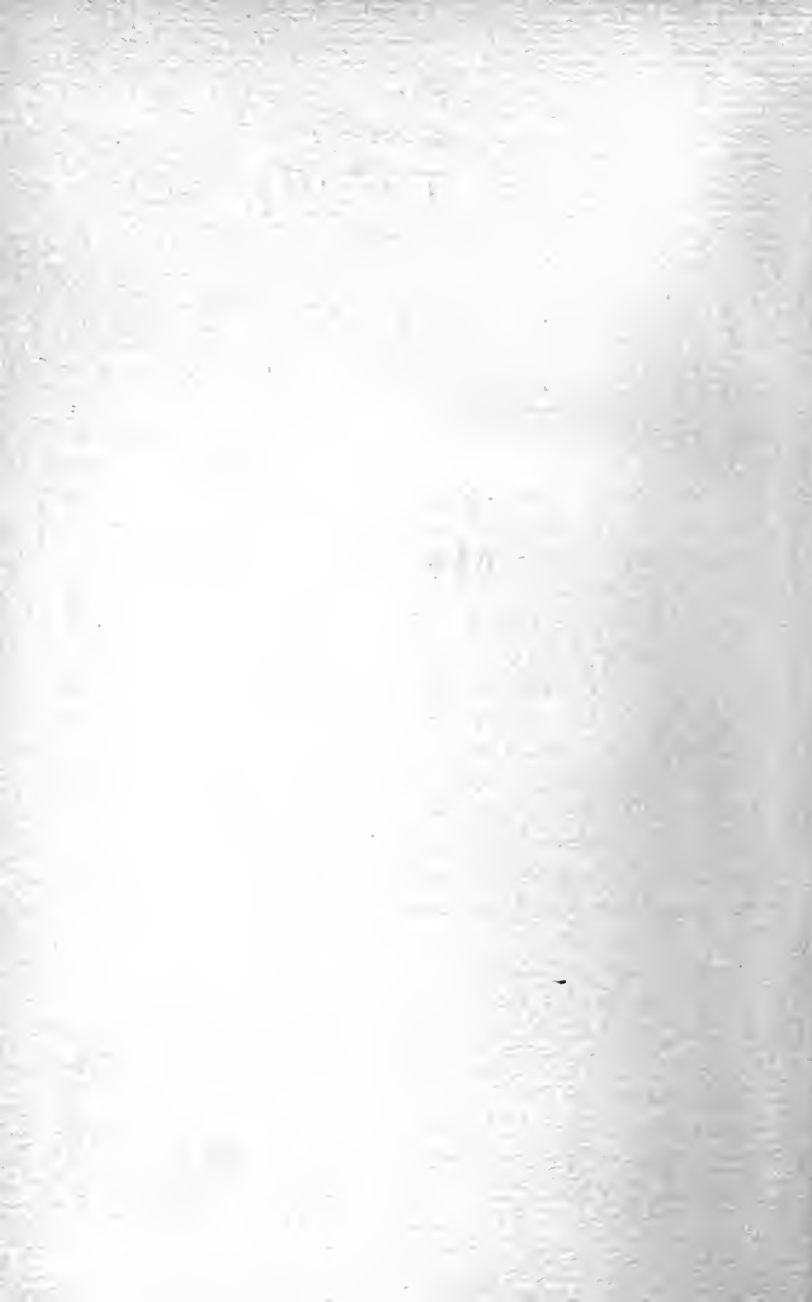
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PART I



CHAPTER I

THERE is a land, which has inspired many masters of song — a land of lofty mountains and deep arms of the sea — of gloomy ravines and impetuous torrents — of naked rocky islands, against which the full force of the Atlantic breaks — a land of silent valleys and summits where the wind moans perpetually. It was here that the celebrated James Macdonald first saw the light. His actual birthplace was a little hamlet of not more than two-score cottages straggling between a sea-loch and the mountains. It was a lonely, edge-of-the-world, gull-haunted sort of hamlet, inhabited only by poor and ignorant quarrymen, whither not even the insatiable angler penetrated, much less telegraph, railway, or daily paper, and its three presiding deities were the Dominie, the Rev. Simon McManus, and Dr. Spens.

Dr. Spens had been but three years in the neighbourhood and lived in the House by the Road — the road that first clambered past the Stone-Quarries, dived afterwards into the Valley of Calder, and finally surmounting the great pass of Ballandarroch reached at last the seaport of Duke's Ferry.

As it was *this* Doctor who ushered James into the world, a few words concerning him will not seem impertinent. He was, as his name indicates, of Northern extraction, but with a youth spent in England. It may appear curious that a medical man of undoubted intelligence (for the Doctor's face was the face of a clever and thoughtful man) should choose to lose himself so irretrievably, but the truth was that Dr. Spens met with tragedy on the threshold of

his career. By the age of thirty he had been the most promising young man on the staff of St. Peter's Hospital in London — one of those upon whom destiny seemed determined to smile — a future baronet and favourite of Royalty. Before his thirty-first birthday he was settled in Tuchan with back for ever turned on London and ambition.

It was, in a way, his extraordinary promise which brought about his downfall. A very rich lady had to be operated on immediately and, as the seniors at the Hospital were all engaged, Spens was sent. He performed the operation with the utmost success but — unfortunately for him — one of the nurses was distracted by a love-affair. She left a pair of arterial forceps in the very rich lady's body and the patient — not unreasonably — died. Alas! how involved in each other's fates are we poor mortals.

Spens might, in time, have lived down, worked down the tragedy of that first operation, but his impulse was to run away, hide his shame and disgrace. He followed it, lacking either resolution or insensibility enough to court Fortune till she smiled again.

No one in Tuchan at any rate had heard of his blasted fame. In that little Scotch village he need fear no looks askance, no mortifying repulses; could forget even that he had ever wished to be celebrated, or that a world existed in which men struggled and battled. His house-windows gave a wide prospect over the Valley of Calder, that colossal amphitheatre around which the hills lay like giant shepherds watching their flock below, their *immane pecus*, the huge grey ancient boulders . . . over the Valley of Calder to where those mighty mountains Ben More and Ben Moich guarded the mouth of the Ballandarroch Pass, eternal sentinels.

The Pass led to Duke's Ferry, to the life of ambition and energy, success or defeat, to all the rewards for which

we poor mortals strive, but Dr. Spens had no desire to climb it.

He was content to remain, with the few hundreds a year that were his by inheritance, in the House on the Road between the Stone-Quarries and Tuchan. He was content to be out of life, to own himself beaten, and nothing now, after three such remote years, seemed worth having save the valley's silence and the majesty of the mighty mountains.

CHAPTER II

IT was New Year's Eve, bitter cold, with a continual driving snow. The Doctor had just finished dinner and was enjoying a pipe, when his housekeeper, a middle-aged dame from the village, tapped at the door and, putting her head into the room, said:

"Please, Doctor, Alexander Macdonald was wishing to speak wi' ye, him whose wife Euphemia is expectin'."

"Very well, show him into the consulting-room," he said a trifle irritably. "I'll be there in a minute."

The Doctor rose from his chair, pipe in mouth, with a slight look of petulance. Another maternity case! His housekeeper's news was certainly enough to disturb the placidity of a tired man expecting a few quiet pipes and then an early bed. No chance of that now at any rate and every probability of another night without any sleep at all. He knew the case. Euphemia had been ill since November, unaccountably ill for one already the mother of six. The good Doctor, as I say, rose grumbling, but then remembered how, but for his own want of resolution, he should have been calling comfortably in carriage and pair on millionaire patients, and with that his mood of half-humorous self-depreciation returned. Shaking his head over his own and other people's follies, with a gentle smile on his lips the while, he entered the consulting-room and, with every trace of ill-humour gone, gave good evening to Alexander.

The quarryman was a middle-sized thick-set person with a decided and deeply-lined face framed on the cheek-bone with a little sandy whisker.

"I'm fashed to ca' upon ye at sic an hour, Doctor," said he, in a sulky tone, "but the wife is ta'en ower bad and Maggie (the quarryman made a wry face) said I maun step up and fetch ye at ance."

"Ah!" said Spens, "I've been expecting you to come for me any day this last week. Your wife's a week overdue, you know, Macdonald."

"I ken that fine, Doctor," replied the quarryman in the same sulky tone. "I'm not exac'ly blamin' Euphemia for her behaviour, but I canna help sayin' to masel' that it's ower rough on a man, when his wife has a bairn on the day o' the year itsel'."

"Come, come, Macdonald," said the Doctor, laughing in spite of himself, "I'm sure your wife would be the first to be sorry that she was spoiling your holiday — and besides you mustn't be so selfish. You ought to be sorry for your wife, not thinking about yourself at such a time. Think what she will be going through in having a child."

"Aweel," answered the quarryman. "I'm thinkin' we hae eneuch bairns without the ane that's comin'. But weemen's never reasonable. Aebody wad think it was the first frae the clammer Euphemia is making."

"Very proper, too, in a mother," said the Doctor rather sternly, for the man's egoism disgusted even while it amused him. "I'll get my instruments and come with you at once. Did your sister-in-law say when she thought the child would be born?"

"Maggie (here the quarryman made another wry face) didna say onything save that I was to step up and fetch ye at ance," he replied, "but I'm thinkin' as she's ta'en this unfortunate turn, that the bairn winna be born before the morn."

The Doctor, agreeing with Macdonald that such a thing was not wholly unlikely, fetched his instruments and after bidding his housekeeper, a resolute rawboned dame

accustomed to be left alone, not to expect him back that night, sallied forth with Euphemia's husband.

"I spaed this wad happen at the beginning o' the week," continued Alexander gloomily as soon as they were on the way, "I sort o' kenned I wad lose ma holiday. It's ower rough on a mon."

The Doctor struck ahead into the cold and dark without listening unduly to the quarryman's complaints. His mind was already occupied with the trouble before him and, besides, to one of his temperament such lamentations seemed rather comical than otherwise. Alexander, however, did not seem to mind the Doctor's silence, but went on grumbling half to himself, half to his companion.

"I kenned weel it wad happen, and, Doctor, ye've no notion what it is to hae a wumman like Maggie in the hoose. She makes a mon fair sick. Sic a clamjamfry frae dawn to nicht. I hate an excitable wumman. I wush the whole business was ower."

With Alexander thus continually bemoaning himself they hurried down the hillside road and after some five and twenty good minutes' walking reached his little white-walled cottage. The excitable Maggie must have been on the alert, for their feet were hardly on the doorstep ere the door was flung open and they found themselves facing her.

"Alexander, the time ye've been," she cried reproachfully to her brother-in-law.

"Doctor, it's lucky ye were at hame. Phemie's ower bad. Ye maun come and look to her at ance."

Dr. Spens followed Maggie upstairs but could not help once more smiling to himself as she called to her brother-in-law.

"Donald an' Roderick and Mary are in the kitchen. Ye maun bide wi' em, Alexander, till Phemie's through her troubles and see they come to nae hairm."

So Alexander sat him down and watched, ignorant of the strange portent that Destiny was bringing, ignorant

that for great portents great preparations must be made. What sorrows were not endured to bring the "old heroes" into the world? But then Alexander, naturally enough, was not acquainted with either Scandinavian or Greek or any other mythology. Euphemia, that tiny woman, lay in sore trouble upstairs. Childbirth had never before caused her any but the ordinary inconveniences. This helplessness, these strange flights of imagination, these cloudbursts of tears, endured by him for nigh on two months were new. "What ailed the wumman?"

Alexander was no seer — could not foretell that from great travails are born those at whom awe-stricken humanity marvels — never thought from what inmost miseries of spirit sprang the sweetest melodies — from what mighty convulsions of struggle emerge the great doers — that the seventh child is like the seventh wave the greatest.

The Alexanders do not realise these things. All he did realise was that everything had been extremely inconvenient; that this baby — about to make its appearance — was more of a nuisance than all the others put together; that he had, in fact, a distinct dislike to it already.

Tiny Euphemia lay moaning on the bed of pain, half-alive, white with agony, dripping with perspiration, racked with intolerable cramps. Tiny chicken-brained Euphemia bore her horrible trial with the brave dignity of maternity.

"Anyway," thought she, whenever the power of thinking lucidly came back to her, "I'm bringin' a bairn into the world. My pains are for a guid end."

Tiny chicken-brained, plucky Euphemia was at her best, but did any premonition of the great Destiny of the coming child haunt, in these anguished moments, her half delirious mind? Did a flash from the future strike her as she hovered on the brink of eternal darkness?

No.

How strange!

CHAPTER III

THE three elder children had been taken by a neighbour for the night, but luckless Alexander felt sufficiently ill-used in having to rock the cradle of the little baby-girl Mary and keep an eye on the boys Roderick and Donald, whose bed had been made up in a corner of the kitchen. From time to time it may be that he fell into a doze, but the fact that little Mary whimpered whenever her cradle stopped rocking prevented him from taking any but the merest snatches of sleep, and moreover from overhead came muffled footsteps, mysterious mutterings, occasional groans. Sometimes (worst of all) there was silence.

The hours dragged on towards early morning, and as yet neither Maggie nor Dr. Spens had appeared in the kitchen to announce that another child had been born to the quarryman; the hours dragged on, taking with them the last hope of his New Year Holiday. With a dumb anger against everything and everybody Alexander submitted to the inevitable. Why should the child make its appearance on this very day? Why hadn't it come a week ago when it was expected? Well, from the beginning of the week he'd known this would happen. Destiny. Always the way. Damn it! The hours dragged on, and by degrees his own grievances became forgotten in the lingering suspense. Was there really some difficulty? But how could Euphemia, already the mother of six, be actually in danger? Alexander sat before the ashes of the kitchen fire, himself grey as ashes and almost immovable. And still the hours dragged on. Suddenly he jumped from his chair with

every nerve a-twitter. Maggie's blubbered countenance peered thro' the half-opened door. "Alexander, Phemie's in a sair state. The Doctor canna say either way." With these words she disappeared. Phemie in danger of her life? Phemie, the mother of six without trouble, hanging in the balance? Alexander was in his own way devoted to his wife, and till then had not realised her situation, but now, when an hour later Dr. Spens came down the stairs with tired, heavy tread and put his nose out of doors for a little fresh air, he hardly recognised in the quarryman the same man, as he stopped rocking the cradle with his foot for a moment and called softly to the Doctor.

"How is she the noo?"

"She's under the anæsthetic, Macdonald," answered Spens. "We must hope for the best. At any rate she'll not suffer any more."

Then he, too, went upstairs again to the bedroom.

But what is this strange dishevelled, blowsy, tear-bedewed, lead-footed, Dervish-dancing tornado of skirts, arms, and hair that flings itself almost without heed of direction or perception of time or space into Alexander's kitchen about noon of New Year's Day as he sits in the extremest stages, bereft even of children, removed by another kind neighbour for their breakfast, that sheds weepings like a tropical thunderstorm, shakes itself in ecstasy by its own hand, vociferates utterly incoherent babbles? Is it not Maggie in the most distraught conditions of Maggie-ness? Maggie with tidings? Maggie in almost uncommunicable triumph? "Alexander, Alexander," she laughs in frenzied jubilation, "she's safe. They're baith safe. It's an enormous bairn, an' och! Alexander man, it's a boy."

Then suddenly, ere her brother-in-law could divine her intention, this terrible Maggie bent down, kissed him, and twirled from the kitchen as tempestuously as she had

twirled in. Many were the outrages which Alexander had suffered at her hands but this was . . . this was the summit of everything. For a minute the enraged quarryman was rooted to his chair. Then starting up and raising both clenched fists to the ceiling, cried:

"Och! Maggie. The day I can get ye oot o' ma hoose."

.

And this is all the philosopher can tell you about the birth of James Macdonald. Considering his celebrity in after life it is indeed little enough. We are informed however that even the gentle Spens felt a certain amount of irritation at having been kept at it again all night.

"Well, Macdonald," he said, "we've pulled her through. We've managed it, but it's been a tough job, a very tough job. You and Maggie will have to watch her carefully to-day and, if she takes worse, come for me at once. I never saw such a monstrous child. That must have been the trouble all along. I hope he won't prove such a nuisance in the future as he has been in making his appearance in the world. No holiday for either of us to-day, I'm afraid. This is the second night in succession I've been up. I must go home and rest."

A monstrous child! This much also the records tell us. A monstrous child! The quarryman picked disconsolately at his little sandy side-whiskers. Maggie, a monstrous child, and no New Year's Holiday! From this the philosopher guesses that with Euphemia (barring complications) now out of the wood, our quarryman's sense of personal annoyance and discomfort returned with quadrupled force.

"Monstrous, is he!" cried Alexander, remembering the phrase with a peculiar bitterness of heart and furthermore denying any sense of obligation to His Hugeness.

CHAPTER IV

EUPHEMIA gradually recovered from her ordeal. As the phrase goes "mother and child did well"; but Alexander found the time of convalescence pass slowly for, with her sister incapacitated from ordinary household duties, Maggie still remained beneath the roof — Maggie, the enemy of quiet, the excitable, the freckled, the abhorred. In less equivocal circumstances he might have throbbed with paternal joy at sight of Euphemia pale, proud, with bairn at breast, but alas! the feeling that James was an intolerable nuisance still dominated the quarryman. It certainly was a child enormous. None born within gossip's memory had ever even approached it in size and weight. Chicken-brained Euphemia, far from sharing her lord's resentment against the phenomenon, nearly burst with pride and received a regular procession of matrons at her bedside.

She imparted strange tidings to her astonished audience.

"There never was a bairn to eat sae hearty, I'm assurin' ye," and here would plunge into the mysteries of young Jim's diet, whither it is unseemly to follow.

All this "clamjamfry" served but to prejudice Alexander still further against James, for he was a lover of quiet besides being a trifle selfish. Often he would exclaim with sense of deepest ill-usage:

"Why couldna Phemie hae a bairn o' rational dimensions? Ony mon would be fashed to hae a conteenual pack o' weemen in the hoose — and sic endless talk about naething mair important than a bairn."

Or again,

"I'm no partial to the extraordinair! There was'na sic a pother wi' the ithers."

There is however no time of trouble utterly unrelieved, and it was a joyful day enough for Alexander when Dr. Spens pronounced Euphemia well enough to get out of bed, and Tuchan forthwith knew the excitable Maggie no more.

One can guess in what an atmosphere she departed — an atmosphere of tears and kisses and huggings, especially of the reluctant James whom she had assisted into the world. Was not the gratified Euphemia assured times out of number that he would become a credit to kin and to Scotland? Was not each prophecy signal for a fresh outburst of tears? Alexander consoled himself during these dewy manifestations of "Maggie-ness" with the ineffable thought that they were the last of her, portending a return to normal conditions. "Sae far, sae guid" said he (pig-headed Alexander), and thereby intimated that James should (as was high time) begin to take a back-seat.

And now the philosopher turns up his cuffs, settles his blotting-pad, dips his pen in the ink, and prepares in good earnest to tackle the great task before him — the biography of the celebrated James Macdonald. Jim has been brought into the world not without trouble, and, huge, hairless, unconscious of anything definite save pap tho' he be, we have him fairly started on life's tortuous and mysterious journey. The reader may find various apologies for Jim in the course of the narrative, but will he be charitably disposed towards the biographer? Before embarking therefore on the story proper, when interference with the course of the narrative would doubtless be justly resented, willingly would this same biographer say something on his own behalf. Like the immortal fiddler he has

done his best. The materials for such a biography were of the slightest. Jim, as anyone in the course of a few chapters may see, tho' of an amiable and obliging disposition towards his friends, is not endowed with the most exquisite sample of grey matter in his cerebellum, slow of speech, incapable of accurate self-expression. What he did actually bring forth was extracted with groans, head-scratchings, and much twisting of the body, and even that much seemed very slender information when compared with the mass of material at the service of most compilers of great men's lives. How came the initial impulse, you may ask? The truth is that the sight of James Macdonald inflamed this biographer in one of his mad moments to attempt this work, one considerably longer and more ambitious than he has ever before attempted, and a subsequent acquaintance with our amiable friend (whom so many of you have seen with an exquisite and refined pleasure) confirmed him in his first impressions. It was not therefore till he had so thoroughly imbued his mind with the spirit of undertaking that withdrawal seemed hardly possible, and already paid a visit to the little Scotch village, our James' birthplace, that this same foolish biographer remembered how he had but the slightest acquaintance with Scotch and Scotchmen. Without a doubt the history of Jim should have been written by a compatriot, and had a native of North Britain come forward, as was meet, the biographer would willingly have surrendered his task and such materials as he had already collected to the Volunteer, but as none ever presented themselves—in the face of many difficulties and discouragements (not the least being his almost complete ignorance of the Scotch language) he has persevered. With the sincere hope therefore that the proud and independent natives of that country will pardon him for so many inaccuracies and absurdities in rendering their speech, the philosopher dips his pen in the

ink, and brings you, in the course of the story, to James' christening.

It was Euphemia led the procession to the kirk staggering under the burden of the gigantic James, whom she had insisted on carrying herself. Behind her, a pace or two, came Alexander "in his blacks," a somewhat sulky and unwilling figure, and after that an admiring body of female neighbours, eager to view the ceremony of His Hugeness's christening, and hauling along with them the other Macdonald children. Our quarryman (amongst his other defects as an erring mortal) was nothing if not obstinate, and we are thoroughly justified, writing as we do from a philosophical standpoint, in again calling him "pigheaded Alexander." A notion once stuck in his head could not be got out by ordinary means. And now, walking with sour and covert glances, he grumbled: "A' they weemen! Why canna they bide at hame and mind their ain business? The world's gane gyte ower Jim." In truth this admiring bevy of female neighbours put him in an ill-suppressed frenzy. Was Jim never to be treated as an ordinary infant? Had not even the Minister, whose patronising airs irritated him so much, gone so far as to congratulate him on His Hugeness's arrival in his usual patronising way? It was a regular conspiracy to impair his ease (thought Alexander) as he trudged along, and the worst of it all was that this universal excitement over Jim seemed justified. The bairn was not an ordinary bairn. Whenever he looked at him, Alexander saw trouble — trouble distinct and inevitable.

Down through the village passed the little procession, down to the shores of the loch where stood the kirk. Over against it on a hillside, with agreeable garden surrounded by red walls and shadowed by scattered clumps of fir-trees, was the Manse—residence of the Reverend Simon McManus.

"So here is our young prodigy," said the Reverend Simon (a square-shouldered man with a square white face and a square white hand) as Mrs. Macdonald withdrew the shawl from the countenance of her last-born. "Blessed is he that has his quiverful!" The Reverend Simon rolled his eyes up to the roof. "He is a fine boy — a wonderfully fine boy."

Euphemia curtsied and kissed the slumbering James, who promptly gave vent to a terrific yell. Mr. McManus frowned slightly and performed the function of receiving James into the Church to the accompaniment of that ceaseless obligato. When the ceremony was over the Reverend Simon, who always attempted to comport himself with the benignity incumbent on members of his profession, said in a hearty voice, and with a smile that creased his white face:

"He has fine lungs, Mrs. Macdonald. I hope he'll be a comfort to you. I'm glad to see the other bairns looking so well."

James' brothers and sisters bobbed uneasily and grinned at each other.

"I hope you're well, Alexander."

"Weel eneuch, Meenister," replied the quarryman with the same sulky air that had characterised him throughout the ceremony.

"Well, well. That's all over," said the Reverend Simon in the same hearty tone but with a suspicion of a frown at Alexander's want of manners. "It's always a pleasure to me to welcome a newcomer into this beautiful world, especially such a fine boy as that. He is a fine boy, a remarkably fine boy. I feel that he'll be a credit to you. Good-bye, Mrs. Macdonald! Good-bye Alexander!"

The little procession went slowly back. Euphemia dandled her son in her arms, with tears of joy rolling down her still pale cheeks. James had once more fallen to sleep

and over the unconscious infant poured his mother's perpetual croon.

"Ye sudna hae greeted in the kirk, Jamie, my wee Jim. Fie on ye, ye sudna hae greeted sae sair. But a' the same the Meenister thocht fine o' ye, Jim. He said ye'd be a credit to the family, Jamie. Sae mind ye grow up an honest, God-fearing laddie and a'ways heed what that guid mon the Meenister tells ye."

Thus did she murmur, as she hugged him close to breast, but upon her sweet and foolish moans broke Alexander's rough voice:

"Mebbe that bairn'll be a credit to us, but it seems to me he's mair likely to be a disgrace."

Euphemia squeezed the accused child even nearer her bosom as if to defend him from accusation.

"An' what's wrang with him the noo?" she cried shrilly. "Is he no the prettiest sicht asleep?"

"There's mebbe naethin' wrang the noo," replied Alexander, "but whiles agae in the kirk he greeted sae loud that I was fair shamed for him."

"He was frichted, puir laddie," said his wife with a fond glance at Jim.

"It wasna sae with the ithers at ony rate," replied her husband. "I'm no a fancifu' mon as a rule, but I canna ding it oot o' ma heid there's something verra queer aboot that laddie. For why did ye suffer sae with him and no with the ither six? For why did he choose the day o' the year itsel' to be born? For why is he sic an enormous size, gey oot o' the ordinair for a babe five weeks auld? A trouble he's been to us sae far an' I'm thinking he'll . . ."

"For shame, for shame, Alexander, your ain bairn!" cried Euphemia. "Onyway the Meenister thocht fine of ye, Jim, did he not, my wee mon?"

"Och' — the Meenister —" exclaimed Alexander with violence. "I canna bide that mon wi' his patronisin'."

"Losh! Alexander — what ails ye?" cried his wife in surprise.

"I'm no Alexander to him. I'm Mr. Macdonald."

"Eh?" asked Euphemia, slow at the uptake.

"The Meenister ca'd me Alexander again. I'm fair sick o' his patronisin'."

"And if he does patronise, who has mair richt than that guid man," answered Euphemia shrilly. "He thoct fine of oor Jim. Fie, Alexander, wad ye quarrel wi' the Meenister on sic a day as this — the day oor Jamie is received intae the kirk? Oh! ye ungratefu' man."

Alexander kicked sulkily at a stone.

"Onyway I'm no fond o' bein' ca'd Alexander by the Meenister," he muttered. "Aweel, Phemie," he continued, "a' this fuss and flummox is ower and we can set doon to a quiet life ance mair. 'Deed, it's to be hoped Jim'll turn out weel after a'."

Even Euphemia's habitual mildness was impaired by her husband's last remark.

"Fuss and flummox! Fuss and flummox!" she cried, laughing satirically. "An' wha's had the maist of it? Not you, I'm thinkin', Alexander. Oh! ye men — ye ungratefu' men. Donald, ye little muck, come awa' frae the gutter! How daur ye spoil your braw claes? Jim, my mannie, listen to what I'm tellin' ye and mind ye grow up and be a comfort to your auld mither."

Alexander sniffed as he followed his wife into the house.

He wished Jim had been a girl.

CHAPTER V

IT is at such an early stage as this in our "Portentous History" that we begin to realise how Alexander's hope that the fuss about his son Jim might subside and the Macdonald family retire once more into the obscurity of a quiet life was from the beginning doomed to disappointment.

Jim might have been brought into the world for the special purpose of plaguing the worthy quarryman out of his senses.

He was born the babe enormous, and, as he grew older, his size increased out of all proportion to his age. Everything was on a gigantic scale in his case — including his infant war cry.

Old friends congratulated Alexander on being father to a prodigy, but the quarryman shook his head dismally over such congratulations. He reflected that in all probability "the prodigy" would fill his capacious lungs and set up a cataclysmal bawling directly he set foot in his cottage, continuing till exhaustion made him stop. He was undoubtedly the sire of six, but till this Jim came on the scene, never had he realised how much parents might have to put up with.

Decidedly he found no cause for jubilation and would exclaim with deepest feeling as he surveyed the grinning faces of his friends, in a kind of melancholy abstraction, " 'Deed, I've no partiality for the extraordinair'."

Then the foreman of the quarry, a noted wag, kept on insisting, with pawky humour, that Alexander must have persistently shirked for years.

"Ony ane capable of producin' sic a bairn should be capable of wark oot o' the usual."

In truth, while Jim was in this bawling and howling stage, there was little peace in Alexander's cottage. Euphemia, after the way of womankind, was genuinely proud of Jim's exceptional talents for yelling and really seemed to feel no inconvenience in being kept awake half or more than half the night.

"Bless his heart, it shows his lungs are guid," she said. "The Meenister noticed them. Eh! Jim, it's fine."

But Alexander's only hope was that when the first infantile tendency to bawl ceaselessly — unless asleep or receiving nourishment — had in due course of time left Jim, he might perhaps become fonder of his youngest son. There are those who relate that His Hugeness's appetite was indeed insatiable, and these gossips are almost certainly right, for his mother, as we have seen, told of his early feats in gastronomy with pride.

When he reached the age of a year and a quarter, however, Mrs. Macdonald noticed one day with alarm that Jim's usually enormous appetite had failed him. He could not digest anything, and she told her husband the same evening that she feared he was going to be ill.

"He can eat naethin'."

"Sae much the better," replied Alexander a trifle caustically. "It'll do no hairm if he's a trifle off his feed. He eats as much as twa bairns o' his size a'ready."

Euphemia, however, was anxious about her favourite and got up two or three times in the night to look at him. Jim was sleeping restlessly with a flushed face, and once or twice he coughed ominously. By the time morning came he was in a high fever and was making a peculiar sound from time to time, like the roop of a fowl.

"I dinna like the looks o' him," said Euphemia. "Alexander, wad ye be a guid man noo and step in at the Doctor's

on the way to the quarries. I sad like him to hae a look at oor Jim. The bairn's wee haunds is as cauld as puddocks an' his heid's flamin' hot."

Alexander had a glance for himself. There was no doubt the child was ill, and he left the house with an objurgation. It seemed indeed as if Jim was always in some kind of trouble; as if he was born to be a nuisance.

Dr. Spens pronounced the malady to be whooping cough and said it was a bad attack.

Alexander thoroughly agreed that it was a bad attack. It was a terrific attack. The strong suffer more than the weak. Never, in all his experience (and he was the father of six) had Alexander heard a baby make such sounds. It was like — like the rooping of ten thousand cocks followed by the roaring of ten thousand bulls. At least Alexander (in a moment of despair) told a crony so. For four or five weeks Jim filled his lungs, choked, rooped, shattered himself with coughing and then howled.

"Eh! mon, it was a dismal affair," said Alexander to the same sympathiser.

All this time Euphemia had been beside herself.

"Am I to lose my bonny big bairn," she kept on crying, as she watched by Jim's cradle. "Oh! Dr. Spens, tell me he'll no dee."

The Doctor endeavoured to comfort the distracted mother. Is it not one of the advantages of the medical profession that listening to and looking after other folk's troubles prevents doctors from thinking of their own?

"We'll pull him through all right, Mrs. Macdonald," he would tell her cheerfully. "Why, bless my soul! this is nothing. What a rascal your Jim is! It's only just over a year since he gave us all that trouble to get him into the world. He can't be wanting to get out of it again, as soon as this. We'll pull him through all right."

Once more the good Doctor exerted himself and Jim

was hauled back out of the jaws of death. Nobody except a baby of enormous strength could have been saved, and it was at least three months before Jim could breathe easily and naturally without waking up purple in the face and then rending the air with convulsive barking.

Moreover *I* am of the opinion that Jim's lungs never *wholly* recovered.

CHAPTER VI

JIM was now convalescent, and Alexander noticed with a kind of stupefaction that his appetite was more enormous than ever. Illness had wasted him terribly, but now he began rapidly to pick up strength, and with every new day the child's lust for food became more abnormal.

"Bless him, it shows his stomach's guid," said Euphemia.

"I'm no dooting his stomach's guid," answered the disconsolate Alexander, watching his wife feed the gigantic Jim, who devoured spoonful after spoonful of his bread and milk with no sense of satiety but apparently, if anything, increasing avidity. "I'm no dooting his stomach's guid, Phemie; I'm dooting how we're gaein' to fill it."

"A' gane," said Euphemia, chuckling and waving the spoon at Jim, who stared at her with round eyes and open mouth preparatory to a yell. "A' gane, Jim."

The quarryman in his turn stared at Jim. What an enormous child he had become since his illness! He was not two years old, but yet as big as any child of five. His jolly round face was red with health and over his big round head the red hair curled in thick clusters. At the present moment the corners of his mouth were turned down. The desire to yell (much to his father's relief) seemed to have passed away, and a quiet melancholy at the thought that he was to get no more food to have taken its place. Then a happy little laugh proceeded from those infant lips. Jim crowed once or twice at his father and mother and fell instantaneously into a sound and refreshing sleep.

Euphemia watched all these changes on the countenance

of His Hugeness in an ecstasy of admiration, the bread-and-milk spoon in her hand, and her own meek face transfigured with pleasure. Then she turned to Alexander.

"Is he no a bonny bairn," she cried "and wad ye grudge him his meat? Fie, Alexander! Did ye not hear what the guid Meenister said, the Sabbath gane? Did the Lord ever let a bairn gae hungry?"

Alexander shook his head gloomily. He knew better than to argue with his wife on a question of metaphysics, and, in the recesses of his heart, lurked a notion that Jim, if he continued to grow in the same manner, would eat him out of house and home. No — the quarryman had never been able to rid himself of the idea that their youngest son was a child of misfortune. Moreover he was nothing if not practical and sentiments of this kind (to which the Reverend Simon was very prone) irritated him profoundly. The question how he was to feed his family, and the enormous Jim in particular, was one not to be dealt with in such a summary and sentimental manner.

"Mebbe the Meenister's richt and mebbe not," he (the pig-headed) answered. "It isna for the like of us to say, but I'm still of the opeenion that there's somethin' extraordinair' aboot oor Jim."

Once more Euphemia rose up in arms. She could not bear to have her youngest and favourite son traduced in any way.

"Why are ye sae unfair to the bairn?" she sobbed; "there's naethin extraordinair aboot him. He's juist big, bonny, sonsy, beautiful, little Jim. How can he help bein' a wee thing big? It isna his fault, Alexander. Ye sad think shame o' yoursel' for talking sae. Jim's juist the same as ony ither bairn, on'y a wee thing bigger, mebbe, for his age. There's naething extraordinair aboot him — naething ava. The Meenister a'ways asks after ye, Jim, and he wadna do that — guid man — if he didna

ken ye were the aipple of your mither's ee. Oh! Jim, when ye graw up to be a man, a'ways do what the Meenister tells ye, and be guid to your mither, who lo'es ye so well."

With a shake or two of his head and a few stifled exclamations Alexander betook himself to the Quarries. It was incredible that Euphemia continued so blind. Something warned him from the very beginning to "look out" for Jim. Why could she not see it as well? "I'm no a fancifu' mon in ordinair," thought he, "but I canna rid masel' o' this feelin." Yes, from the beginning he had foreseen, prophesied trouble, and trouble of one kind or another there had always been. But if he so much as mentioned the fact to Euphemia, what was the result? A flood of protestations that she was an ill-used woman, a torrent of appeals to the Rev. Simon. Alexander was rent now by the conflict of two emotions — one a gloomy satisfaction that his prognostications were so far correct, the other a monstrous feeling of indignation that the child was not of the same calibre as the other six.

CHAPTER VII

IT is impossible to give more than a rough sketch of Jim's boyhood, to do more than lightly indicate the salient points, for these early days faded from the memory and only a general impression remains.

For several years (our record tells us) he continued to have a defender in his mother, and a critic in his father. The latter, as time went on, was more and more driven to the conclusion that of all the babies he had ever known, Jim was the biggest, clumsiest, noisiest, and most unmanageable — most boisterous and most expensive.

Indeed there was ample justification for this last conclusion for Jim's appetite continued prodigious, and he ate as much as any two other members of the family, where none were naturally abstemious. Then again in the matter of clothes! It was the rule in the Macdonald family (as indeed in all families except those of the very rich) that the coming-ups should wear the cast-off garments of their elders, but as that big, clumsy, red-headed Jim was (at the age of three) a size and a half too large, if we go by ordinary standards of infant measurement, he couldn't be got into the cast-offs of Roderick and Donald, and seeing that his two elder brothers had not yet grown out of their own clothes, which certainly would have contained him more or less adequately, if not elegantly, Alexander (putting one more bad mark to his account) was obliged to make a special expenditure on his behalf.

So far, perhaps, no special complaint, no tangible objection could be lodged against the youngest Macdonald, but — alas! — it seemed to the thrifty and anxious parents that hardly was Puppy Jim supplied with garments, than

hey presto! he was out of them — grown out or burst out — it were impossible to say which.

There never was a child so incapable of keeping himself even moderately clean and decent (our records tell us). He was ten times clumsier and more puppy-like than the ordinary boy, forever falling down and cutting his knees (his breeches into the bargain you may be sure), tumbling into fenders, upsetting and breaking, sliding down steep places to the detriment of the aforesaid breeches, chucking mud, getting mud chucked at him — in short being “boy” on the exaggerated scale, which characterised everything connected with him. Now things were already fairly desperate when the last addition to the Macdonald family was made, and Euphemia gave birth to a daughter, to the huge delight of Alexander, who had wanted a girl instead of Jim, it may be remembered. But the consequences of the arrival of this baby-girl, tho’ natural, were yet fraught with further misfortune (sartorial and otherwise) to Jim, who, now that there was a younger member of the family, ceased, at a fatal time (a time fatal to his clothes at any rate) to have the largest share of his mother’s attention, occupied as she was with baby and house, and no longer able to perform that duty (so dear to a mother’s heart) of mending. In fact, to put it briefly, Jim, in the matter of scandalous attire, went from bad to worse.

To worse! say I? What a flaccid term to give an idea of the boy’s appearance! Alexander bore with this crescendo of disreputability for two or three months, even replaced a garment or two, ruined beyond repair. Then came a sudden explosion.

“I’ll be damned if I buy the bairn onything mair,” he exclaimed one day with sudden fury. “He’s a pairfect disgrace.”

Euphemia, nursing the baby, raised a tearful face and said to her youngest son;

"Oh! Jim lad, why canna ye mind your claes like a guid laddie! Hear what your faither says. Ye've angered him sair, my bairn. Be a guid bairn and tak' mair care o' them in the future."

Tears, puppy-like embraces, promises from Jim, and the mother's heart was won over for the time. Even Alexander began to hope that perhaps he might amend his behaviour. But alas! the lad was too big and clumsy. With the best will in the world he could not keep either himself or his garments out of trouble.

Then Alexander ceased to buy him anything else, even as he had threatened, and the first bad mark was put against him in his mother's memory.

You must try to picture to your mind our hero, Jim, as he ran about the streets of the little Scotch village of Tuchan, that cluster of four-score houses under the shadow of the mountains. He wore nothing but a very short woollen undergarment and a very dirty and nondescript overgarment, which looked like a petticoat in reduced circumstances but might equally well — in remote days — have been a sack. This was confined to his waist by a cord and gave him the appearance of a diminutive monk. His red hair, very long, curly, and uncombed, tumbled over his eyes or blew behind him as he scampered down the village street on wild employment. He was forever bawling at the top of his lungs, cuffing his companions — playing the Scotch "tipcat" in front of people's doors and thereby endangering the eyes of old folk; forever throwing stones at cats and fowls, rolling in the dirt, teasing the queer old lady who kept the "sweetie-shop," forever an animated compendium of animal spirits and mischief — careless, heedless, and happy, except when he got a scolding from his parents. Then to be sure came an impulse towards better behaviour, but nature was too strong for him. The others were of course, in a way, the same as he. In Jim, though,

everything was magnified five or ten times. His animal spirits were that much greater than those of ordinary boys. He was that much more restless, that much more clumsy and wilful. Where many would escape, *he* was always detected. Concealment was as impossible to Jim as good behaviour. Had it not been that his father was set against him from the moment of his birth and that his mother had now the little baby-girl to look after instead of lavishing all her care on him, it is possible that he might have reformed and so saved all the tragedies of his early life, for his was, at bottom, a simple and affectionate nature. Fate, however, decreed that he should journey the thorny path Think of him tearing down the main street of Tuchan, the most unkempt and ragged of all the children — a ringleader after a fashion — half-admired and half-feared — great, big, puppy-like, red-headed Jim with the round, good-humoured face and the bawling voice, which betrayed his presence hundreds of yards away

Think of him and be sorry for him! This wild time of mud-pies and stone-fights and tipcat is perhaps the happiest time of his life. He is careless and free. He gives other people pain — his mother for instance — but then he is too young to realise it. He gets plenty of hard words and spanks from village matrons, but then he takes them all in good part. For the moment too he is quite indifferent as to whether he wears a coat as smart as Johnny Findlater's, the postmistress' tidy son, or a sack with a cord round it, or runs about naked.

He *would* run about naked, if you gave him the slightest encouragement. Did you ever hear the story of the day when Mrs. Findlater brought the letters? I must not tell it here, it is too shocking. Yes, Jim was a happy, healthy, jolly young rascal in those days.

His bad moments were short, few, and far between.

He becomes more unhappy in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VIII

ONE day the Reverend Simon McManus noticed our hero fighting with another boy in the main street of Tuchan — that imposing thoroughfare, which he considered should be sacred to all the proprieties. Now the Minister kept an eye on everyone in the village and from report and observation had already begun to suspect Jim of being a bad character. Judge of his dismay therefore when he perceived in Jim's opponent none other than Tuchan's best boy, the Dominie's most promising pupil, his own favourite, the tidy impeccable Johnny Findlater, and guess, if you can, at his indignation when, even as he approached with all the speed he could muster, red-haired rascality, carrying off the victory, laid white-haired angel-faced virtue dusty and bleeding on the cobbles.

"Jim Macdonald!" thundered the Reverend Simon, at the same time catching hold of the culprit, "you wicked boy! How dare you fight? What do you mean by it? Tell me at once!"

Jim had been so much absorbed in gloating over his adversary's prostrate form that he had not heard the Minister coming, and seeking now, when too late, to dodge away under the arm of Authority, found himself too firmly held.

"I dinna ken, Sir," he gave the time-honoured answer of all boys — and perhaps of all grown-ups too — caught doing something which they ought not to be doing.

"Oh! you don't know, don't you," said the Reverend Simon, his white face scowling with anger. "We shall have to see if we haven't a way of *making* you know, my

young friend. Oh yes! I've heard of your doings and I've had my eye on you for some time."

His big white square hand shook Jim violently from side to side, while with its fellow he helped Johnny Findlater to his feet. Jim's slender, delicate-looking foe was in tears, and one of his innocent blue eyes seemed rather the worse for wear.

"Are you much hurt, Johnny?" inquired the Reverend Simon tenderly.

"Ma neb's bleedin,'" replied young Findlater abruptly and with a sob.

"Don't cry, my little man," said the Minister. "Run away home and tell them it wasn't your fault that you're in such a mess."

Johnny, knuckling his eyes, turned to go. "Wait a moment!" cried the Reverend Simon to him. "Wait a moment! Here's a ha'penny for you. Now run away home and wash your face and have tea and you'll be all right again in no time at all."

He smiled the smile which creased his white cheeks and then, with startling suddenness, turned all sullen anger, as once more he shook Jim Macdonald to and fro.

"Now, my lad," he said, "what have you got to say for yourself? I've heard a good many complaints of you. They tell me you're the noisiest and worst behaved boy in the village. You're a big lad. Why don't you behave better?"

"I'm sure I dinna ken, Meenister," answered Jim, wriggling.

"Nobody minds a high-spirited lad having a little fun," said the Reverend Simon, "but you go too far, Jim Macdonald. You're always shouting and fighting and making a nuisance of yourself."

Mr. McManus examined his captive attentively.

"Bless my soul," he exclaimed. "The boy's positively indecent."

To tell the truth Jim's unconventional costume was calculated to display all the mysteries of his anatomy at every violent movement, and the Reverend Simon had ample justification for objecting to it on the grounds of public propriety.

"Positively indecent!" continued he, gazing at his captive with every symptom of abhorrence. "Positively indecent!" The ring of disgust in his voice grew stronger the longer he looked. Compared with the neat and scrupulous Johnny Findlater, Jim was indeed a deplorable object, and the Rev. Simon revolted at him in every fibre of his body, finding in this red-haired obstreperous child the anarchist of the village — the rebel against law and order — the infallible symptom of trouble in times to come, and deeming it a matter of absolute necessity to get him under the control of authority before it became finally too late.

"What an object the boy is," he said with anger still rising. "I'm going to take you back to your home, Jim, and have a talk with your mother about you. It's really impossible that you should be allowed to go on in such a state — quite impossible. Don't wriggle now. It's no good trying to escape. I've got hold of you and I'm not going to let you go."

In such a way the Minister hauled along the red-headed recalcitrant Jim, who stubbed his bare toes into the ground, made himself as heavy a weight as possible, did everything except weep, but all in vain. The Reverend Simon held him fast and would not release him.

They found Mrs. Macdonald at the wash-tub. She was already in a flurried and suddly condition and, when she saw her son approaching under the custody of the Minister, she waved her bare arms in a manner reminiscent of her excitable sister Maggie and cried dolefully, "Guid sakes! Whatever has the bairn been doin'?"

"I found him fighting in the street with a smaller boy," answered the Reverend Simon in his most impressive manner.

"Fechtin'," said Euphemia with something like an air of relief. "Eh! Jim. Ye naughty bairn. Why canna ye be a peaceable laddie? See, ye've angered the guid Meenister!" Jim made an indistinguishable noise, and the Reverend Simon, who was still holding his collar, stood with a frown on his smooth white face and his lower lip protruding ominously.

"It's not the first time this boy has been a nuisance, Mrs. Macdonald," said he. "I've heard several complaints from your neighbours of his having stoned their cats and broken their windows. Your boy must not be allowed to become a public inconvenience, Mrs. Macdonald."

As our records inform us over and over again, Mrs. Macdonald had an unqualified reverence for Mr. McManus. The seal of authority was on that square white forehead; that protruding lower lip balanced words of ineffable wisdom; whatever he said must be right (oh! no wonder that Alexander felt moments of irritation against the Minister) and so now, with this determined accusation launched, she fell into a kind of despair from which only an emphatic recantation from the same quarter could have rescued her. Even on her own part she had felt certain misgivings of late and begun to fancy that Jim by his wild behaviour flouted her mild authority. Had not Alexander too always said he was a troublesome lad, and here, on the top of all these doubts, suspicions, uneasinesses, and fears, came the wise and good Minister with a declaration to the same effect? Euphemia looked in a distracted manner from her boy to the frowning white face of the accuser.

"Oh! Jim, why canna ye be a guid bairn?" she said.

"I'm no waur than the ither laddies," replied Jim sullenly.

"That is preposterous, my lad," said Mr. McManus pompously. "Perfectly preposterous. If you hadn't been worse than the other boys, why should I have had so many complaints about you? Besides I saw you — saw you with my own eyes fighting in the street — caught you red-handed. It is preposterous *indeed* for you to say that you are no worse than the others."

This reasoning of the Reverend Simon was perfectly convincing to Euphemia. If there were all these complaints about him, Jim must indeed be a bad boy. He must be a bad boy, if the Minister said so. He must be a bad boy, if Alexander said so. Her thoughts went back to the time when she was in travail, to the night when she nearly gave her life for him; she remembered her pride in her huge baby boy and the envy in other mothers' eyes; she remembered how they lugged him almost by force through his attack of whooping-cough; she remembered how nearly she had lost her "bonny big boy." The tears came into her eyes and flowed unrestrainedly down her cheeks (poor worried, stupid Euphemia!) and after all her "bonny, big boy" had become a "bad boy," the trouble not the envy of the neighbours, a nuisance abroad as well as at home, he she hoped would grow up a comfort to his "puir auld mither." Jim was turning out a rascal. Oh! dear, oh! dear.

She cried, "Oh! why canna ye be a guid laddie?"

"I'm nae waur than the ither laddies," replied Jim in the same sullen voice. His childish mind felt that he was being treated unjustly. As yet he had not sufficient power to tell why. Only he knew that, for some reason or another, it was always he, Jim Macdonald, who was caught — always he who was made the scape-goat — always he who was punished.

In those early days Jim was still soft-hearted. He had half a mind, if he could have escaped from the clutch of

the Reverend Simon, to bury his head in his mother's skirts and implore her forgiveness, to tell her that appearances were against him, that, if she could believe it, he was not such "a bad bairn" as the neighbours and Mr. McManus said. But alas! the Minister still held him fast, and his presence was an effectual bar against any overtures. Moreover a certain obstinacy which was undoubtedly his, resenting the confusion which surrounded him and everything connected with him, clamoured that muddle had precipitated him into misfortune, that muddle was mishandling him now. "If I could but explain somehow," thought Jim . . . but alas! muddle was equally the state of his own brains. The moments for reconciliation and explanation slip by ere they can be retrieved, and the little rifts grow wider and wider till each and every one becomes a chasm.

"Now," continued the Reverend Simon in his pulpit voice, "there is one more thing I wish to speak to you about. I feel it my duty to draw attention to Jim's costume. It isn't decent, Mrs. Macdonald. There isn't another boy in Tuchar goes about dressed as he is, if you can call such a mere covering a dress. He's very nearly naked. Can't you find him some proper clothes?"

"Meenister," replied Euphemia wearily, "Alexander and I arena rich folk. Time was when Jim was as neat dressed as ony bairn in Tuchar, but what does the laddie do wi' his claes? He graws oot o' them sae fast that we canna be ever buying him new anes. He either graws oot o' them or spoils them wi' his pranks. Sae what are we puir folk to do? There's the ither bairns to be considered and Jim maun tak' his share wi' them. If he canna manage to keep as neat as they (an' there arena neater bairns in Tuchar) he must juist pit up wi' ony shift we can mak' him. His faither said whiles syne he wadna buy him mair claes seein' the laddie did naethin' but

destroy them as soon as bought, and sae it came aboot that Jim gaes abroad in sic a condition."

The Reverend Simon frowned and released his captive, who, without waiting for further parley, ran away.

"Yes, yes," he answered, "of course the boy cannot help his growth. He is indeed a very big lad. He was a big lad in the cradle, I think."

"Yes, Sir," replied Euphemia, "a'ways a big laddie, oor Jim."

"I remember him well, but this does not excuse his behaviour. If he behaved better I'm *sure* he could keep his clothes in better repair. I feel he is a great cost and trouble to you. You have my warmest sympathy, Mrs. Macdonald."

"Oh! Sir, you're verra kind."

"I know you try to shield him from me. It does infinite credit to your good motherly heart, Mrs. Macdonald, infinite credit. I wish all mothers were as good as you. I'm afraid tho' it's impossible to conceal the fact that Jim's a bit of a rascal."

"Och! Sir."

"Mind I do not mean to say anything very bad of him at present. He's only a child after all, but I must say, I think it would be a good deal better if, instead of spoiling him at home, you sent him off to school."

"Eh! Meenister, Mr. McManus," cried Euphemia in sore distress at the suggestion (it was the first time that such an idea had been put into her head). "Send Jim to the schule! He's but a bairn yet. He's ower young to gae to the schule."

"Plenty go as young as he," said the Reverend Simon. "He must be — well — seven and a half?"

"Losh! Meenister, he's nobbut five and a bittock."

The Reverend Simon opened his eyes wide in astonishment.

"Five and a bit! He's the biggest lad I've ever seen for that age."

"Ou — aye," responded Euphemia, "he's a weel-grown laddie."

She felt some of her original pride in Jim return. Poor Jim — a year of constant escapade and punishment had rather dimmed his original glory. He was no longer admired as a prodigy of anything except naughtiness.

"He's a bit young for school certainly," said the Reverend Simon, "but I wish you would talk my advice over with your husband, and see what he says. Good-day, Mrs. Macdonald."

"Good-day, Sir," said Euphemia, curtsying. The Reverend Simon held out his square white hand.

"Surely between friends," said he with his creased smile. Euphemia wiped her sudgy palm on her coarse apron.

"Och! Sir," she said.

The Reverend Simon's hand clasped hers with a cold firm clasp.

"Jim, Jim," cried his mother, as soon as the Minister was well away down the road.

There was no answer. Jim had bolted.

Euphemia, in great distress of mind, waited for her husband and her bairn to come home.

CHAPTER IX

JIM was sitting behind a heap of stones and tin cases and rubbish of other kinds, which lay under the shadow of an old wall by the road to the Stone-Quarries, prey to an overwhelming desire for complete solitude. "Oh! solitude!" cries the philosopher, "balm of . . . " But hold hard, unworthy pen of mine, it is not your duty to launch into praises of even such an admirable and lyrical state as that of Solitude. Your task, in fact, is clear enough, namely that of chronicling the adventures and sensations of the Scotch giant from the moment of his birth to the time when . . . but neither must you anticipate the story and baulk his countless admirers of their entertainment. No, let us start fair together again and relate, as movingly as possible, how Jim sat behind this heap of stones under the shadow of the old wall, loathing from the bottom of his heart the society of the human race. Presently (I happen to know and do you, oh! pen, therefore take it down) there came the sound of shouting, and within a few yards of him swept a train of his young friends. He peeped over his little hill of stones, cautiously raising his red head, and beheld a hoop-race — a form of sport that he adored. Why therefore did he not burst out of his lair and join the rout? Why indeed? Because a horrid something, stronger even than the desire to run in a hoop-race, made him duck his red head down again and sit miserably alone.

No — no — no — To-day he felt too unhappy, too ill-used to join the sport.

Followed a patter of light feet and the shrill voice of

a young girl asking the clamouring children in front to stop.

At the sound of this voice Jim cowered lower down under his heap of stones — lower down, as if the youthful owner of it might discover him in spite of his efforts to remain hidden.

He clenched his hands in rage and shame and banged his red head against the stones. Lower and lower down under his heap of stones cowered Jim. He seemed to dread lest some eye should behold the agonies of his childish rage.

The voices and running feet died away as the children turned at the foot of the hill towards the village. The silence of evening brooded over the road. A little burn chuckled to itself with a kind of melancholy chuckle. But a short time ago, what a splendid play it had, for it leapt down the mighty sides of Ben More with a score of companions. Yet here it was now wandering alone through the evening. It chuckled bravely indeed, making the best of a bad job, but all the time the inner voice of it seemed to be saying, "How sad it is to be alone!"

Far away Jim heard, through the still air, the mooing of cows. They were being driven home for the night. Another access of rage seized him as he caught the peaceful friendly sound. They were farmer McLure's cows, he knew, and farmer McLure was the father of dark-eyed mischievous Jessie, at the sound of whose voice he had but a few moments ago cowered down and banged his red head. What was there in the mooing of her father's cows or the sound of her voice to drive him to such despairs? Why was everything that jogged memory in that direction a gadfly of the imagination? Such dignified and stately diction as this must be used in describing even the earliest experiences of great men, and would that space would allow us to picture in rolling periods (ere the above question

answers itself) how the uncouth and tattered boy gambolled puppy-like before her to gain her attention; shyly gave her apples or tops won by his own prowess; at "prisoner's base" would never allow her to be taken! The very sight of her indeed touched strange chords, and she found her big clumsy ally of the utmost service; knew very well how to make the best use of him!

Thus for a time Jim continued as happy as a king, and found Jessie, pretending, all he could desire. Had he heard indeed how she made fun of him to Johnny Findlater, it might have come to blows with that young gentleman sooner.

But he never did.

For a time, I repeat, our Jim continued happy as a king. Then an unexpected blow fell — not from Jessie herself (he had no reason to suspect her yet) but from Jessie's mother.

Report had reached this lady, a lady with high ideas of her own importance — her husband's importance — the importance of Calder's Farm — the importance of everything connected with or depending on her, that the two were great friends, and the sight of a red-headed, bare-footed urchin, clad in nothing but a sack, tearing down the street after a clucking, scuttering fowl struck her into an access of maternal apprehension.

The outcome was that her daughter was forbidden to speak to the disreputable overgrown one except under absolute necessity — forbidden at any rate to be friend any more — ally — and continual playmate.

"So-ho, gently!" cries the philosopher, laying down his pen and putting a puzzled hand to his forehead; "what is this we're coming to? Is our overgrown friend a sentimentalist at such an early age? Is it this maternal edict that proves the source of his woes?" In very truth we discover, sorrowfully enough, that this suspicion is well-

founded, that our Jim, in unvented emotions, begins to blame not Jessie but her father and mother, begins even to hate them and become a prey to such loneliness as he has never felt before. Do we not further learn that in his progress thro' the confusions of disappointment the cloud that had settled over him ever since Mrs. McLure's fiat, broke after a not very long duration of these psychological ineptitudes and let the sun come shining through?

Oh! happy, happy Jim. Jessie disobeyed her mother and played with him the whole afternoon. It was the happiest afternoon he had had for weeks. All his old fondness for Jessie welled back into his heart. He could have done anything for her, given her anything.

All that Jessie wanted, however, was a particularly lustrous blue marble of which he was the owner. She wished to give it to fair-haired, blue-eyed Johnny Findlater, yclept by all, virtue incarnate.

A little wheedling, a little flattery, a few promises to soft-hearted Jim and, after such an afternoon of happiness, the marble was hers.

No wonder that after such an easy victory, Jessie presumed a little on her power. The next time they met he was humble, shy, and adoring as ever and Jessie contemptuous.

At first he could not understand the sudden change, thought *he* must somehow have offended Jessie, asked her and got nothing but scornful derision for his pains. Then suspicion began to get hold of him, heightened when he saw the new alliance with Johnny — new at any rate to him — suspicion (oh! Furies of Hate and Revenge!) and then hideous conflagrating certainty when Master Findlater showed him the marble, boasted, and ran away as fast as his legs would carry him.

From that moment (oh! Death and Destruction!) he

knew that Jessie had betrayed him, and his soul thirsted for revenge, illogical revenge, not on her, but on his fortunate rival.

He found him alone that very afternoon and indulged in mortal combat. Victory was his indeed, and for the instant glorious, but yet, after all, he had to pay a bitter price, for as it seemed, victory had turned everyone against him — Jessie, the Reverend Simon, and his mother.

If poor Jim felt lonely and deserted, when cut off for the first time from Jessie, he felt ten times lonelier and more deserted now. These were perhaps childish griefs, you may say, not to be compared to a man's griefs. Yet they were the keenest young Jim had ever known and he could hardly bear them. Or you may say, "No child could have felt so keenly." Remember, he was not as other children. Everything in him was exaggerated and, as it were, premature. Are these not always penalties which exceptional mortals pay for being different from their fellows?

So he lay brooding under the shadow of the old wall, behind the heap of stones and rubbish, with his red curls in the dust and his honest, fat, freckled face buried in his hands.

Tears, which he wished no one to see, stole thro' his fingers on to the ground. He felt angry, humiliated, and sad all at once. He felt lonely and deserted. He felt unjustly treated.

Many of us have felt like that and many times in our lives but it was so with Jim for the first time.

He had lain there for an hour or more. The evening star had begun to burn on the forehead of the dusk, the mountain-ashes had ceased to shiver at the breeze, which blows in the gloaming, even the solitary, half-melancholy chuckle of the burn seemed to have grown more subdued, while Jim passed thro' his agony.

Then, once again, footsteps sounded on the upland road and rough homely speech. The scent of tobacco-pipes came to him in his lair. He started up, as if from a dream, dried his eyes, and put his head over the stones. His father and four or five companions came swinging towards him from the Quarries.

Alexander caught sight of the red head.

"Is that you, Jim?" he cried. "What are ye doin' there, my man?"

"I juist came to meet ye, faither," answered the boy, "and I was settin' here waitin' for ye."

"Come awa hame then, laddie," said his father. "Its ower late and mither winna ken what's happened to ye. Ye sudna bide oot sae late."

"Faither," said Jim, slipping his hand into Alexander's, "I've been fechtin'."

"Eh?" asked Alexander.

"Fecht in wi' Johnny Findlater an' the Meenister's found us and tuk me hame, and I'm feared mither's gotten a notion I'm a — a bad ane. 'Deed, faither, I didna mean t— t— tae—"

Alexander took his hand away from Jim's.

"Jim," said he, "I'm fashed to ken it. I thocht the last week or twa ye meant to behave better. Nae mair till we reach hame. I'll hear what your mither hass to say."

CHAPTER X

ALEXANDER took a few days to consider Mr. McManus' suggestion.

"What d'ye think about Jim gaein' to the schule," said Euphemia, who was in a sad state of indecision, over and over again to her husband. "I'm wae to send the bairn. I tauld the Meenister I dooted he was ower young an' he said I maun tak' your opeenion."

"I'll smoke a pipe or twa ower it," replied Alexander. "It strikes me, Phemie, Jim wad be nae waur for a trifle mair correction than he has at hame. I'm dootin' we hae spoiled the bairn. He's a big laddie, gin he is a wee bit young, a verra big laddie."

Perhaps Alexander would have made up his mind earlier if the suggestion had come from anyone except the Reverend Simon.

"He wasna patronisin'?" he took care to ask.

"No — no," replied Euphemia, "juist kind and interested. He thocht Jim was ower big and wild to be rinnin' about the street doin' naethin' ava."

"I'm thinkin' for once in a way he may be richt," answered Alexander.

And after some two dozen pipes he came to the conclusion that Jim should begin his education.

Euphemia wept a good deal and submitted to a decision that she would have been unable to make herself.

She had however the joy of seeing Jim once more decently clothed in order that he might begin his school life.

CHAPTER XI

THE school-house and the manse and the kirk were all at one end of the village. Consequently the Dominie and the Reverend Simon were close neighbours and, in a way, close friends — that is to say as close friends as it is possible for two self-satisfied people to be.

Except Dr. Spens, who lived in a state of retirement on the road to the Stone-Quarries, there was no one in Tuchan equal to them in mental attainments and so they made a somewhat formidable alliance to be coped with by one overgrown, red-headed urchin.

Jim's arrival at the school was preceded by his reputation for unruly conduct.

"His parents have had to put him under your care, my dear Maitland," said the Reverend Simon to the Dominie, "because he was becoming a regular nuisance at home. He appears to be most wilful and obstreperous. His father thinks it would be a good thing if he had more correction. Look after the lad, Maitland, otherwise I fear he will be worse than a nuisance when he grows up."

"Dinna fear, McManus, I'll look after him to rights," was the Dominie's answer, and that somewhat brutal and sarcastic personage began to set about Jim the first day he came to school.

That first day was but an earnest of all Jim suffered during his five years under the Dominie's care, or rather want of care.

Tho' he was so precocious bodily, he seemed, to those brought into contact with him, to have no mind at all, and if he had any brain under those tangled red curls, the

Dominie was hardly the man to find it. Mr. Maitland was naturally unsentimental about small boys, and his profession had long ago taught him that it was necessary to take the upper hand before it was taken from him. Moreover he, like a great many others, found the world go round so fast that he had no time to examine more than the surface of anything. Now Jim was extremely sensitive, and a certain amount of vanity made him very susceptible to personal slight. Therefore, as, from the moment he entered the school, the Dominie began to flash his humour upon him, he cut a ludicrously poor figure, and with a gesture of amusement to the other pupils the school-master consigned him to the lowest place in the lowest class.

I admit it is a question whether Mr. Maitland had any intention of being especially brutal, but he undoubtedly regarded Jim as lazy, sullen, and obstreperous, and so, without troubling to enquire further, treated him accordingly. In fact he discovered in him an excellent target for scholastic wit — the wit of the stronger at the expense of the weaker — the most despicable wit in the world — and thereby gave the children in the school a lead, for when they saw Jim to be helpless and unresisting, in spite of his size, tho' not particularly prejudiced in favour of the Dominie in other directions, they followed his example and combined to bully the newcomer, who found the forces arrayed against him too strong and fell into a hopeless lethargy.

The days, when bare-legged and clothed in nothing but a sack, he had galloped joyously down the street driving hens and cats before him, were gone forever.

Before he went to school, he had been in some degree a ringleader. Now he soon became a miserable butt with hardly any joy in life.

He might perhaps have had a reasonably happy time,

altered the Dominic's attitude towards him, and become a less helpless creature, had it not been for Jessie McClure and Johnny Findlater. These two children were his inveterate enemies and they had great influence with the others, Johnny because he was the head-boy, Jessie because she was the prettiest girl in the school.

Jessie had always despised Jim, even when she allowed the great puppy to fawn on her. She thought him hideous and clumsy and his devotion to her a thing to be ridiculed, even though it warmed her vanity. Johnny had never forgiven him for a certain blow of the fist and the humiliation to which he, Johnny, the admired of all, had been consequently put.

So the dark-haired girl and the fair-haired boy did everything they conceivably could to make Jim's life a torment.

A TYPICAL DAY

Jim was inches taller than any other child in his class, but his place was at the bottom of it. There he sat with his great red head all tousled, his tongue in his cheek, and one eye shut, scribbling more or less cabalistic signs on his slate.

It is true he cut a disastrously poor appearance in school, but the Dominic, by always making him a figure of fun to the other children, spoiled whatever chance he may have had of using his small modicum of intelligence.

If he was in good humour he would cry:

"Brobdignag, bring up your writing exercise."

Then, standing by his desk, with the luckless Jim at his side, he would hold out the slate at arm's length and go into fictitious ecstasies of admiration at the performance, seeming to add a peculiar point to all his sarcasms by the aiming of his long flexible nose.

"Grand! wonderful! marvellous!" he used to ex-

claim. "Jim, lad, ye've done fine this time. Here's a raibbit and here's one of Farmer McLure's coos and here's our gracious Queen on her throne. Eh! Jim you're an airtist born, laddie. Ye draw fine, but, my auld hippopotamus, I'm no wantin' ye to draw these pictures. I'm wantin' you to put your ABC on the slate, just your ABC, Jim."

Then he would wink at the schoolroom who, in duty bound, burst into applause at the Dominie's imaginative wit.

If, however, as very often happened, he was in a bad temper, he would catch Jim a smack on the side of his flaming head and say:

"Of all the ugly, freckled, useless brawns I've ever had to deal with, you're the worst, Jim Macdonald. How many times have I told you that 'rat' is spelt with only one 't.' Let the class see if you can spell 'Jim.'" Jim, honestly trying his best, sits down at a desk, squares his elbows, puts his tongue in his cheek, closes one eye, buries his flaming head over his slate, and writes laboriously G — I — M.

Then the wrath of the Dominie would boil over.

"Come here! Jim Macdonald," he would roar in a voice like an infuriated bull's! "I'll pit a wee bit sense in your thick hide, if I canna pit it into your thick heid."

The class, half in delicious terror and half in amazement, saw the spectacle, which never palled, the spectacle of the Dominie flaying Jim.

ANOTHER DAY

After a bit, the Dominie, despairing of making Jim a scholar and wishing to find an outlet for his own ill-humour, would put him to stand in the corner with the "Dunce's cap" on his head. To the self-conscious, sensitive Jim this was perhaps the worst of all his tortures, because it was the most protracted. How he loathed standing in

that dark corner, the cynosure of every eye, with the tall white cone of paper on his head! The very touch of the abhorred thing sent a thrill of pain through him.

Very often, great, continuous tears splashed down on either side of his quivering mouth. Poor Jim was too sensitive to cruelty. As the daylight filtered through the narrow windows of the classroom and palely illumined the ancient, wooden, battered desks, dusty floor, dirty white-washed ceiling, and rows of boys and girls bending over their work, hustling and nudging each other, or surreptitiously pointing in sarcasm at himself, he used to wonder why he had become the butt of the Dominie and the whole school.

If he stared through the windows he could see the twin peaks of Ben More and Ben Moich, those sentinels that guarded the Ballandarroch Pass. How jolly it would be to run about on their mountain-sides instead of standing under the Dominie's sarcastic eye with the "Dunce's cap" on his head!

"Someday," he thought, even in those early times, "I'll rin awa' from hame, rin awa' up the Ballandarroch Pass and see whether there arena kinder folk on the ither side. Oh! how I wish I was aulder! There canna be many people in the world as cruel as the Dominie." (Oh! ignorant, innocent Jim!). Or again, "Perhaps there are children somewhere, who play instead of calling names and pointing fingers and laughing. (Are there, Jim?) Why sudna I be like the ithers? I sud so like to be."

Alas! his happy days seemed to fly faster than the tears rolled down his cheek.

"What's the price of blubber?" called the Dominie.

TO AND FROM THE SCHOOL

Johnny Findlater, who was destined by the Dominie for a scholarship in one of the principal Scotch Universities,

was hand-in-glove with his preceptor, and so there was no one to put a check on the habit of gibing at Jim gradually fostered in the school. The Dominie himself set the fashion by calling him "Brobdingnag" or in some Homeric reminiscence "Earthquake producer" or in a less subtle phrase "our elephantine natural," and his pupils, especially the head boy, were not slow in following suit.

Jim was saddled with a variety of opprobrious and humiliating names, derived from the general amusement at his personal appearance and lack of intelligence.

For nearly all of these Johnny Findlater was responsible. Fair-haired, blue-eyed Johnny was not only gifted with a nasty, sarcastic tongue, which he did not scruple to use at our strange vagabond's expense, but also with a natural turn for drawing, and Jim, whose appearance gradually degenerated under misfortune, becoming wilder and more unkempt every day, made him an apt model.

He hit the hulking clumsy figure to the life — the tangled red head — the tattered clothing all too short for the continually sprouting limbs. The idea was popular and there came to be a conventional "Jim" well within the scope of the least accomplished artist or the youngest children. Moments, gleefully seized from work in school or, owing to any reason, fortuitously unoccupied, could always be pleasantly spent in drawing "a Jim."

More than once there was a contest in the school and the prize was awarded to the happiest delineator (Johnny barred) of our hero's characteristics. Jessie distributed the prizes!

In a very short time "Jims" made their appearance on every blank wall fronting the route to the school — farcical, brutal, hideous "Jims."

Our unfortunate hero, as he pursued his lonely way to and from the school, often determined to look doggedly in front of him so that he might not see these cruel counter-

feits of himself — determined, we say, but his resolution never lasted long. It was not in human nature to pass without looking at them, however much they might hurt.

Sometimes he looked with a dull feeling of rage, sometimes with choking throat and hot tears dimming his vision, and as his hulking form lumbered along even the tiniest tots mocked him from the gutter with their shrill little voices, while from every white-washed surface on the road, those ludicrous and ill-natured presentments of himself robbed him of his self-respect.

CHAPTER XII

I HAVE made this truthful attempt to write the life of Jim, alias James Macdonald, alias the Scotch Giant, for several reasons, but one of these is certainly not the mere glorification of that celebrated personage.

We are but as we are made.

James is nothing if not modest, like all big men. He leaves it to dwarfs and similarly cramped creatures to play the arrogant and would be the first to protest if I used my poor pen for the mere purpose of extolling *him*.

No, my purpose is infinitely more subtle and perhaps as humble as James himself, tho' it must be left to the reader, who reaches the end of the story, to discover.

For this reason, tho' I feel it unnecessary to do more than sketch the various miseries which he endured during his childhood (there is surely no need to dwell too minutely upon unhappiness), I, at the same time, shall endeavour not to neglect my points. Were I to fail in making them, that moral, to which I have referred above, would be in a great degree lost, and the purpose of writing this biography remain unfulfilled. Were I to fail, James would not seem that which he now is, a comparatively happy and useful member of the human race. Were I to fail, this apology for the family of titans, gigantics, and kindly monsters would fail too, and the reader pray that our earth might never again breed any but mortals of decent, sober, average, reasonable, comfortable, unremarkable size.

Therefore, tho' certain incidents of minor interest may have occurred between the day on which Jim first went to the school and the day he left, I think, and Jim, with

whom I have had the pleasure of consulting more than once upon the management of these memoirs, thinks with me, that it were best to comprise this period of his life in a brief summary. I hope thus to hit the gold with one arrow well-aimed, instead of using a quiverful.

Therefore oh! my longbow, do thou fail me not; therefore speed arrow, and prithee, O feather of gray-goose, guide it to the mark!

It was after two or three such years of persecution, that our young friend fell into a kind of hypochondria.

Anyone who is temperamentally lonely, or whom circumstances have bereft of friends, knows that this habit is easily acquired. Jim's reverse of fortune had the worst effect upon him, and tho' he probably had no real enemies in the school except Johnny and Jessie, their influence made the others give him the cold shoulder.

So, our Jim, from loneliness, fell into a hypochondriacal way of thinking; thinking, it may be, too much about himself; thinking instead of doing; thinking subjectively, instead of using his mind objectively, and acquiring like Johnny Findlater, the first boy in the school, various useful items of information, not to mention such sciences as Latin, geography, the mathematics, caligraphy, and history; thinking with gloom, derision, pathos, anger, jealousy, melancholy of his own preposterous size, which showed no sign of increasing more slowly than in previous years; thinking with envy of Johnny Findlater because he was of graceful proportions, blue-eyed and fair-haired, and because he was *admired* by Jessie McLure.

"Why does she dislike me?" he asked himself. (Oh! Jim, incapable of independence.) Surely because of this very same absurd and clumsy body! It was this absurd body that originally brought him into trouble, when other children escaped notice; sent him, while a mere bairn, to school,

while other children of his own age were playing in the street; made him an object of derision to the sarcastic and overbearing Dominie; the butt of his school-fellows. (True, Jim, but the grateful camel does not sneer at his hump, he makes use of it.)

At last he came to such a pitch that he hardly dared look into a pool or a glass for disgust of his huge body. (The rhinoceros, when he drinketh in the river and beholdeth his camous countenance and horned snout, grumbleth not but rejoiceth in the strength of that horn and the toughness of his hide.)

Naturally, under such conditions, he was far from being a success at school (indeed, he never rose from the lowest place in the lowest class, but sat staring moodily before him biting his nails or drawing cabalistic figures on his slate) and naturally too the Dominie, whose offensiveness increased by a kind of arithmetical progression, wielded a vocabulary grown every day more acidulated, until at last a season arrived when he ceased to take any notice of him whatever. He had come to consider him hopeless.

And now the world had turned into a place of torment for Jim, when he should still have remained a happy child. He was in perpetual anguish, fearing ever the eye of surprise, the finger of scorn, imagining that everyone either laughed or sneered at him, always at war with himself, a most disastrous war indeed. Poor enormous and stupid Jim! He was incapable of helping himself, and there is no one to help those who cannot help themselves. The little pin-pricks he received at school were indeed such as less sensitive boys might never have minded at all, but to him — to him they were darts fatally poisoned. He had in fact by now utterly degenerated.

The Reverend Simon went about darkly prophesying and saying that he always knew the boy would come to no good (a hit — a palpable hit for the Reverend Simon),

the Dominie, as we have seen, gave him up as hopeless, while rumours of the sullen scape-grace reached Dr. Spens in his lonely house on the road between Tuchan and the Stone-Quarries. I wonder if he recalled those words of his, spoken at the time of Jim's birth:

"I hope that boy won't be such a nuisance in after-life as he has been in coming into the world."

If he did, he must have thought his foreboding justified.

Alexander and Euphemia were not unnaturally disturbed, disheartened, nay, alarmed at their son's career, if such an expression could be applied to his condition of stagnation at school.

His father turned from bellowings of wrath at his huge and shrinking offspring to dreary and melancholy forebodings, while even his mother felt that the case of Jim was very trying to poor and hard-working parents. Often she would say to him in despair, after every kind of exhortation had apparently proved useless and he still remained at the bottom of the whole school:

"Eh! Jim, we canna guess what will come to ye."

Once Jim lost all his hyper-sensitiveness and cried in return.

"And oh! mither, why wasna I made the same as ither laddies!"

Alexander and Euphemia looked at him in surprise and Jim at once repented of having spoken.

"What d'ye mean, lad?" asked the quarryman.

Jim stood shuffling his feet, running his hand thro' his red curls, and opening his mouth several times before speaking. At last he said:

"I'm sae big, faither."

"It's no your size that matters, Jim," replied his father, "tho' it's certainly extraordinair. It's the fac' that everybody says you're a guid-for-naethin' laddie. It's a sair trial to your mither and me. I dinna ken what to mak'

of ye, Jim. No, it isna your size is the principa' matter, but the fac' that ye mak' no exertion ava'."

At that Jim cursed himself for having spoken. There seemed to be an insuperable barrier between his parents and himself. Insuperable. They did not understand what misery this huge, overgrown body of his caused him. He was sure that it was the cause of all his misfortunes. Oh! if he had been the same as other laddies. Oh! if he had been fair-haired, slender, and blue-eyed like Johnny Findlater! Oh! If he had been anyone except himself, one of the usual, decent, average, reasonable, comfortably sized boys, then he might have got through his time at school, if not with the distinction of the gifted, yet at the placid level of the stupid.

Can you believe this? It is a little pathetic, it seems to me. All this time our hero had a secret hope at the back of his mind that he would stop growing in a short time and at last be no taller than anyone else. How ironical for a budding giant to think this! How ironical for him to wish this! Yet he did, for he told me so himself. Jim, like a great many others, had to learn how to make the best of himself, instead of wishing to be something different.

At that time Jim, tho' he was only ten, looked at least fifteen.

Poor old, clumsy, Redhead.

CHAPTER XIII

SO much for our Jim at school.

I do not think it necessary to dwell any longer on those days of misery, rather farcical misery, perhaps.

Now dawned the last morning that was to watch Jim thro' the narrow dirty windows of the school-house, as he sat tongue-in-cheek, with one eye closed and head bowed over the slate.

As fortune would have it, Johnny Findlater, in a particularly aggressive mood, had been hard at work tormenting him all thro' school-time. The Dominie also, kept awake till the morning hours by a cough, proved particularly irritable, and bade Jim for the first time in many months put on the "Dunce's cap."

This was the ignominious punishment which his soul detested and, as Mr. Maitland had been more lenient to him lately, out of lack of interest, he felt the dreadful hour very bitterly. Moreover at the end of lessons the school-master dilated with scarifying verbosity on his morals and manners to the delight of all the other children. "And now, my intellectual Brobdignagian friend," said he, "rin awa' wi' ye into the yard and cool that massive forehead, fevered by sae much study, wi' the air of heaven. Ye needna take the 'Dunce's cap' wi' ye unless ye particularly wish it."

In his eagerness to be quit of the Dominie's pungent scholastic humour, Jim had for the moment forgotten *the thing* on his head. With a suppressed fury, that only contributed a little more to the general mirth, he dashed it

into a corner and flung into the yard which served the children as a playground.

He had a headache and a backache and something like a heartache. Really and truly he felt more miserable even than usual. Gibe, gibe, gibe and nag, nag, nag were beginning to wear out his patience. At least it was hardly "patience" that made him submit to the tormenting of Johnny and his friends, rather some weakness in his organisation, which prevented him from retaliating. Our friend had not been stitched together with strong fibre in spite of his big body.

He slouched moodily along with hands in trouser pockets, looking miserable and unkempt. His cap was pulled over his freckled face, and from underneath it fuzzed out on all sides wisps of uncombed red hair. His dirty grey shirt, grown long ago too small, was open at the neck and chest, for all the buttons had dropped off it. Too small also was his tattered coat, the sleeves of which came half-way down his forearm, even as the coat came half-way down his back. If however these garments were too small, the knickerbockers were as much too large, being the ancient corduroys of a certain stalwart quarryman. Indeed they almost reached his ankles; enveloped him, as it were, in a bag. So a degenerated, hopelessly degenerated Jim, hating all the boys and girls for playing happily around him, while he was feeling miserable, he slouched along.

(Envy and hatred, my dear Jim! Hatred and envy! What very uncomfortable companions to carry about with you!) The very picture of sullen discontent, our hero took up his stand, apart from the others, against a little shed in the corner of the yard. His back was to the wall; his eyes on his clumsy boots. Occasionally he watched the games for a moment or two, and then relapsed into dark abstraction.

The other children were too much occupied to pay

particular attention to the youthful misanthrope, but Johnny Findlater, being in a particularly cruel mood that morning, tired of play, cast his eyes round in search of sport. Where was Jim? He was not a moment in discovering him, back against the wall, eyes moodily bent on the ground.

"Come awa', Jessie," cried Johnny. "Lets gae an' mock at Jim. I've a new idea."

"Oh! ye clever laddie," replied Jessie in an ecstasy at his powers of invention. "Come awa' all of ye," cried Johnny again to the other children, and the cry drew most of the school from their play. It was quite a long time since any new way of diverting themselves at Jim's expense had been discovered.

Johnny and Jessie, attended by the little troupe of children, made their way across the yard. O! spectacle foreshadowing the courses in which all these young lives will run, and arousing all sorrowful emotions in the philosopher's breast who must philosophise at any cost — interrupt the story to do so if necessary — O! little cloud of children, clattering across the schoolyard in thick juvenile boots, Tam o' shanters and bonnets, who go home to thick bread-and-butter and milk, at present your skins are thick as childhood's boots and childhood's bread-and-butter. You have no thought in following your two leaders, blue-eyed, fair-haired Johnny and black-haired passionate Jessie, but the entertainment of the moment. You cannot put yourselves in Jim's place for, lucky children, you are ignorant of life. So far, life has spared you any pain and therefore you do not know what pain means. O! children without imagination and without intuition, you are the luckiest. You need only feel your own sorrows, and they will probably be heavy enough; you will never have to feel the sorrows of others. So, clattering, laughing, light-hearted children, you follow your leaders with all the ignorant and joyous cruelty of youth, joyous and cruel

because of ignorance. Your lives will be as happy, perhaps, as it is possible for human lives to be. You will plough the valleys, fish the sea, hew the stone, breathe the purity of open air till an obscure grave holds you with a rough headstone to commemorate your simple virtues and obliterate your simple defects. Girls and boys, your lives will be the happiest, because you will think the least about life. You are all nice, healthy, rather cruel children, and you follow your two leaders, not suspecting that in them and Jim Macdonald, whom you are going to torment, are sterner, deeper, and wilder passions than any to be found in your own natures.

Once again let the philosopher cry aloud! Where is he that does not feel sorrowful at the sight of children, as he notes the little warps, so slight in youth, which must turn into great obliquities with the grown tree! What will become of the sensitive shyness of Jim, the clever cruelty of Johnny Findlater, the passionate egotism of Jessie? What will become of those three natures which have clashed together in early youth? With strange futility cries the philosopher, "What is the life of a human being from childhood to the grave?" and the answer comes, "Even as the flight of a stone through the air, even as the flight of the stone, which Jim throws in the next quarter of an hour, even as a missile regulated by vast forces which operate automatically."

Far better is it, cries the philosopher once more, to hew the stone and fish the sea and plough the valley, to do the work under your hand than to sit aside and watch the stage of life with a sentient heart.

So clatter on, children, leaving that absurd creature the philosopher to his profitless musings, clatter on to the scene about to be unfolded.

Be thankful O! children, you are cast for small parts in the drama. The humblest are the happiest.

CHAPTER XIV

AS the little crowd of tormentors approached, Jim turned half round with one knee lifted against the wall, and knowing only too well what to expect from the scornful look in Johnny's bright blue eyes, gazed at them in despair. It was the fact that everyone was against him which cowed him.

"I was readin' the noo, Jim," said young Findlater, "I do not think ye care for readin'."

A burst of laughter came from the children at this humorous interlocution. Did not everyone know that Jim had considerable difficulty in spelling out the letters of the alphabet, that a book of the simplest description would have been beyond his powers? He made no reply, but gazed at the little crowd of children and their two leaders, gloomily and savagely. "Tell us if ye like readin', Jim," said Johnny. Still no reply.

"Wull ye no answer, ye daft hulk? Tell us or it'll be the waur for ye."

Johnny advanced a step, clenching his fist. Jessie McLure watched him eagerly, all her pretty dark face alight at his bravery in taunting the huge, the silent Jim. But however much our oppressed hero might resolve to be silent and stubborn, it always ended in his giving way in the end, and so at last he answered like one whose spirit is broken:

"Ye ken I canna read, Johnny."

"Ye idle, guid-for-naethin' idiot, ye fat-headed loon, every bairn here kens ye canna read a line, mair shame to ye. Anyone o' they bairns could write a taunt on the back o' your coat, if it were clean eneuch, and ye wouldna

be able to read it." A shout of laughter and applause came from the little band of children, for at the present moment Jim's back was actually decorated with an insulting inscription. He pressed himself further against the wall at the sound of the exulting cry. Was it not the fact that everyone was against him that cowed him?

"Aweel, Jim," continued Johnny. "I'm tellin' ye that I was readin' the noo — a thing which it seems ye canna do and it's mair than likely ye never will be able to do — and I was readin' aboot they enormous beasties that lived on the airth lang syne, thousands and thousands of years ago, Jim. Enormous big and fulish they were, Jim, the same as you every bit. Their bodies were bigger than the kirk, and they hadn't mair sense than a maggots. Sae they just lumbered and clumbered up and doon the airth. An', at first, Jim, a' the ithers was frichtened at them because they were sae big, an' the wee anes hid in their holes and stood ahint the trees while the enormous monsters went howling and roaring thro' the forest. But they big beasties were sae fulish that they was aye bein' droonded or killin' ane anither or fallin' into the fire, an' at last the wee anes loked oot frae their bit holes and keeked oot frae ahint the trees and smiled to theirselves to see sic huge hairmless meeserable fules. An' after a lang, lang time, Jim, the wee anes grew bauld and were not frichtened ony mair at the big anes. Sae they chivied them into the sea or onto the tops of the mountains or into the deepest place of the forest or made sairvants of them. An' noo, Jim, it's the big anes that are frichtened of the wee anes, just as you are frichtened o' me, Jim."

"Please, let me bide," said Jim dolefully, "let me bide, Johnny."

"Why?"

"I dinna meddle wi' you. Will ye no let me bide?"

"Fancy Jim meddlin' wi' us! The notion!"

"The notion," echoed the other children.

"Ye daurna meddle wi' anyone!"

"Jim daurna!" came the faithful cruel echo.

"Coward Jim!" cried Jessie with her dark face aflame.

"That's richt, Jessie," cried Johnny Findlater. "Jim's a huge hulkin' coward like they big beasties lang syne. Ye canna deny it, Jim."

No answer.

"Ye canna deny it," said Johnny.

"Ye canna deny it," repeated Jessie.

"Ye canna deny it," came the cruel echo.

Still no answer. The gloomy and morose look had gone from the big red-headed boy's eyes. They were soft, pleading, and miserable now. One of his knees was drawn up into his stomach as if to preserve himself from possible attack. He was pressed right into the wall.

"Did ye understand my story, Jim?"

"Did ye understand the story?"

"Did ye understand, Jim?"

Again and again came the monotonous questions from Johnny, Jessie, and the cruel echo. However much Jim might determine to be silent, he had to answer at last.

"I didna understan'," he said mournfully. "I canna understan' muckle, ye ken."

"Jim canna understan' muckle. Jim canna understan' muckle."

The exquisite humour of this admission made Johnny smile, but it filled Jessie's dark face with disdain.

"Do ye understan' this?" said Johnny, walking towards Jim and lifting his pretty insolent features up into the other boy's big freckled face. "Do ye understan' this?" You're big and I'm sma', and yet you're frightened o' me. Do ye understan' why that is, Jim? It's because you're a coward."

"Coward, Jim," repeated Jessie.

"Coward," chorused the other children.

"Deny that you're frightened o' me, Jim."

No movement or word from the tormented one.

"You're scared to touch me."

No reply from Jim.

"If I was to dunt ye, ye wudna dunt me back."

No answering look.

"Ye big, cowardly stupid fule, you're twice my size and yet ye daurna touch me."

"Jim daurna touch Johnny," chorused the children as they stood watching the pair with interest vivid in their faces.

"Oh! Johnny, Johnny, you're fine," cried Jessie. She jumped with tossing black hair and clapped her hands.

Young Findlater turned his head at the words and found in the sight of her shining eyes, tossing hair, and slim erect figure a new inspiration. He leant forward and caught her arm. For a moment she was rather scared.

"Let go," she cried, struggling to free herself; but Johnny pulled her towards him without attention to her protests, while the other children, possessed one and all by the excitement of cruelty, showed a circle of glittering eyes and compressed lips.

"Jim, ye great hulking coward," he said, "let's see if you're frightened o' a lassie."

Whatever were the sentiments of the victim of oppression towards the black-eyed daughter of the McLures, he at any rate found no expression for them but merely stared in an uncomprehending way at her as she hung back, with a new light already glinting in her eyes.

"Jim," continued Johnny, with a ring of concentrated insult in his voice, "you're not worth hitting. If it wasna for that I'd hit you mysel'. You're no game for lads, only lassies. Jessie, you're no feared to hit Jim, are ye?"

Jessie's big black eyes flashed scorn and hate, and she moved a little nearer to the unkempt figure leaning against

the wall. "See, Jim," cried Johnny, "e'en a wee bit delicate lassie's no frichtened at ye. Gae on, Jessie."

The girl screwed her lips into a thin, cruel line, tossed back her black hair, and moved forward amidst absolute silence.

"Gae on, Jessie," said Johnny again.

She came right up to Jim, who looked down upon her with a bewildered, frightened look that seemed to argue him powerless to resent even this last ignominy, and, even as he looked at her, the girl, drawing a short breath like a hiss between her clenched white teeth, struck him a quick little blow in the ribs with her fist. For an instant he did not seem to realise that she had given him a blow, but continued to stare at her in the same bewildered, cowed fashion. Then, all of a sudden, he sprang forward as if propelled by the recoil of a powerful spring, roaring incoherent passionate words with all the full force of his lungs. He touched Jessie as he bounded forward, and she fell to the ground half stunning herself, but he paid no attention to her; indeed, did not notice she had fallen, as with great strides and quivering, outstretched hands he leapt forward in the direction of Johnny Findlater.

His heart was still tender towards Jessie (oh! foolish, sentimental Jim), but Johnny he hated at that moment, hated with a murderous hatred.

Now no one had ever before seen Jim make an offensive movement, and thus no one was on the lookout. So unexpected therefore was the result of Jessie's blow that Angel-faced Virtue was nearly caught by infuriated Brawn. Had he been actually caught, he might have been killed, but as it was he ducked under one of Jim's arms, for the latter was too blinded by passion and too clumsy to be difficult to elude, and ran as fast as his legs would move in the direction of the yard door with Jim heavily wheeling and bounding after him. The other school-children, terrified and screaming, scattered in every direction.

CHAPTER XV

JOHNNY FINDLATER, conscious that he alone was in danger, threaded his way with much skill thro' the scattering children, thereby gaining on the subject of our biography (who insensibly slackened speed in order to avoid knocking down the younger ones) and almost reached the door before Jim extricated himself. He ran nimbly and well, looking back from time to time to see how his pursuer was faring, and now only a few yards remained before he could slam the door, bolt it (for it bolted on the further side) and escape at leisure. Swiftly Jim realised this. All the insults and ignominies, to which he had been subjected during his years at school, came back to him in one flash. He was in a white heat of fury, wanted an immediate, satisfying revenge, thought of no consequences, had eyes blind to everything save the flying Johnny. Mad, mad, mad was red-headed Jim, and in a paroxysm of madness, stopped running, stooped, and picked up a round, smooth stone. . . . Straight and true flew the stone, and struck young Findlater, luckily for all concerned not at the base of the skull but on the top of the head, with such force however that, without another movement, he flung up his arms and fell face-downward to the ground. A groan arose from the children who witnessed the catastrophe, and there was a terrified silence.

At that moment Mr. Maitland, entering the yard to ring the cracked bell which called his pupils to school, almost stumbled over the body lying in the doorway. "What's the meaning of this?" said he, looking at it in amazement and then with still greater amazement at Jim,

standing with wild red hair, flushed freckled face, teeth bared in the fury of madness, and great raw fists clenched. "What do I see here?"

And Jim, what did he see? What would he have done if the Dominie had not come so pat? So ungovernable was the fury of his rage that he might have killed Angel-faced Virtue, as he lay upon the ground, but for this unexpected recruit to the rebellion of his passions, but now, at the sight of the man who had made his life at school intolerable, called him outrageous names he did not understand, put the "Dunce's cap" on his head that he might be despised by all, lavished unrelenting sarcasm upon him and given an extra point to it by the aiming of that long, hateful, flexible nose, a new tide of insults swept into his memory. Desire for revenge flew from the fallen foe to the one who now confronted him and, amidst a hammering of pulses and throbbing of temples, he saw him, as it were, thro' a Red Mist, in a haze blood-coloured, while that hateful flexible nose seemed to project itself as an especial incentive to vengeance.

"What's the meaning of this?" asked the enemy, looking from the prostrate Johnny towards Jim, fierce and determined, and then away to the other children with their startled, frightened faces. There was no answer to the question, for a sense of guilt tied their tongues, dimly conscious as they were perhaps that their behaviour towards Jim had been largely responsible for the catastrophe and thinking as they all did at that moment, from the biggest to the smallest, that Johnny Findlater was dead. "What's the meaning of all this? Who is this lying here?" said the Dominie once more as he stooped and lifted the unconscious boy in his arms. The curly fair hair was stained with blood oozing from a wound in the head, and the long fair eye-lashes had closed over the blue eyes. "Johnny Findlater!" cried the Dominie in a voice which showed the anxiety he felt for his favourite. "Johnny Findlater!"

"Who was it hurt him?" he said, furiously facing Jim, with the limp body in his arms. "Do you ken anything about it, Jim Macdonald?"

Jim did not answer a word but stared at him with the same fierce flushed face, drawing his breath in great gasps. At that moment Jessie McLure, who, tho' half-stunned by her fall, had seen the whole occurrence, rushed up to the Dominie like a little fury.

"Is Johnny deid?" she sobbed convulsively, looking at the still, white face of the boy. "Say he isna deid," she cried. Then tossing back her black hair and pointing with quivering finger, she exclaimed, "It was him, Jim Macdonald, who threw a stone at Johnny. See, here it is." She picked it up from the ground.

"Is this true, Jim Macdonald?" asked the Dominie in a voice of thunder, and Jim, confronting the enemy amidst breathless silence, with flushed scowling face, his short tattered coat, and knickerbockers flapping over ankles, a grotesque petrified into a figure of terror, knew that his moment had come. In the silence his quick heavy breathing could be heard.

"It *was* you then, Jim Macdonald," said Mr. Maitland. "Just wait a minute, my lad. Mrs. Jones!" he cried, and the gaunt and angular person who kept the school in a state of moderate uncleanness appeared, mop in one hand, pail in the other. "Mrs. Jones, look after this boy till the Doctor comes. You, Angus," he said to one of the small boys standing in the yard, "rin as fast as your legs will cairry you and find Dr. Spens. I saw his cairt at Mrs. Simpson's door not five minutes ago." Mrs. Jones carried the still unconscious Johnny into the school-house and then the Dominie advanced on Jim.

"Now," he said, "you wicked, godless, murderous lad, I'll give you a welting that you'll remember to the end of your days."

Yes, yes, Jim knew that his time had come as, reckless of all save revenge, he awaited the approach of the enemy, feeling no longer a boy's strength, young tho' he was, but a foretaste of that almost superhuman strength which was to be his in days to come, that strange gift of the gods which singled him out from among his fellows and doomed him to loneliness all his life long, that gift of the gods which he must accept with all the disadvantages, all the sorrows accompanying it. But now he felt it for the first time, and for the first time felt glad.

He stood immovable amidst the same breathless silence that had prevailed since young Findlater's fall, and the Dominie came closer to him and closer. For many a year Mr. Maitland had ruled the roost and his self-confidence was supreme; but nevertheless, as he drew near to Jim, he felt somewhat daunted. For the first time he realised something, and that was that Jim Macdonald was an uncommonly big and probably an uncommonly strong boy. "And yet — pooh!" his thoughts ran, "it's only a boy after all, a boy to be thrashed, a boy who can be intimidated by authority." Yet that fierce ironical scowl on Jim's face was new to him. True however to his pedagogic theories of intimidation he advanced, and, as he felt self-confidence going for the first time in his scholastic career, tried bluster.

"So you want me to come for you, Jim Macdonald," he said. "Very well, my lad, very well indeed. We'll see who's to be master." Jim eyed the long flexible nose with his fierce scowl unchanged.

A dangerous little light played in his eyes. When he was within a yard of Jim, Mr. Maitland stopped.

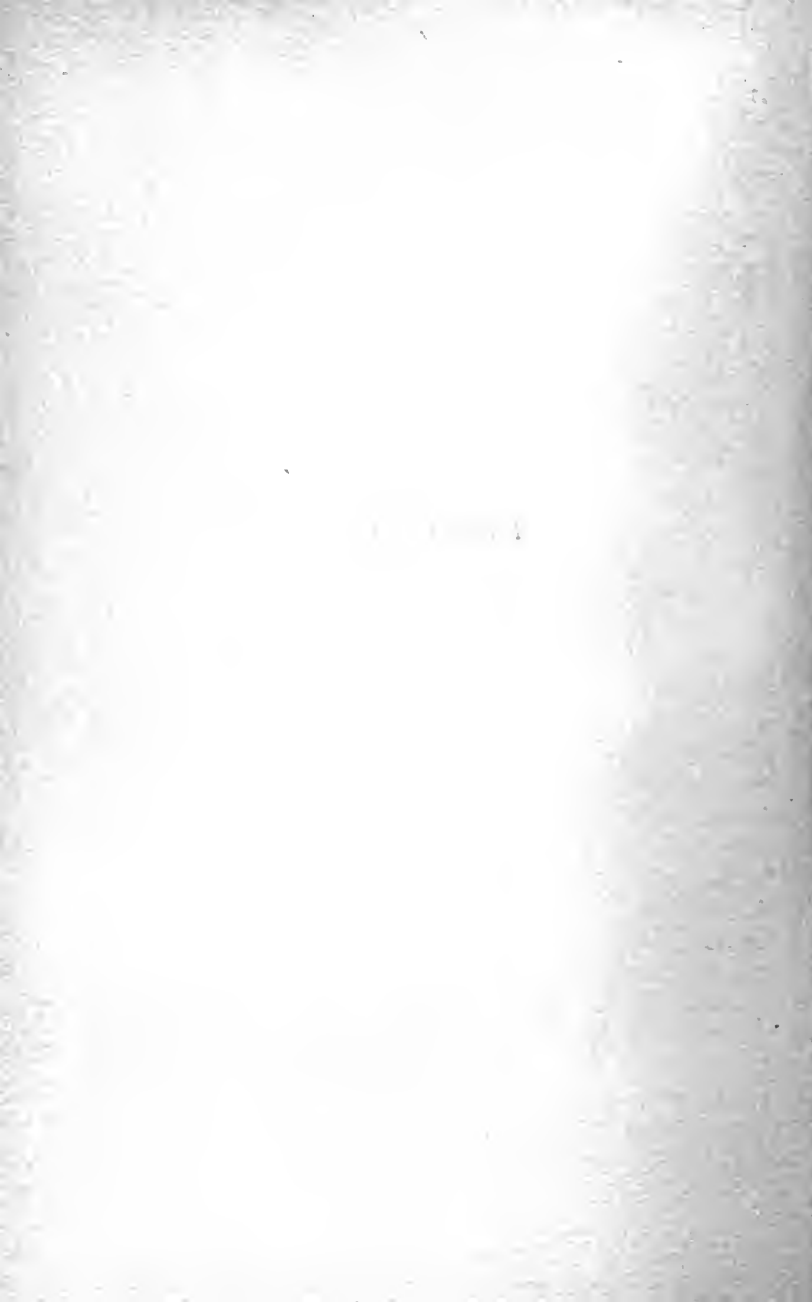
For almost a minute the two confronted each other in silence.

Then, pulling his failing courage together and stepping forward, the schoolmaster seized Jim smartly by the collar.

All the devils of revolt and revenge screeched in the boy's ear at the Dominie's touch. Turning a half-turn and letting his right shoulder go well into the blow, he struck his sarcastic preceptor straight on the end of his jutting fleshy nose. The Dominie staggered back three or four paces holding the fingers of both hands to his injured face, but Jim, with the miseries and ignominies of five long years wiped out by the spurting blood of Mr. Maitland's nose and an insane whoop of triumph, sprang for the yard door and liberty.



PART II



CHAPTER XVI

TO achieve a reputation is something, even if it is only a reputation for wickedness. And yet how many reputations, including Jim's, are utterly undeserved!

Our red-headed friend, whose career up to the present time we have followed with considerable attention, was indeed a gross fraud. He might be labelled "dangerous" but under that stalwart chest, whose exact measurement at the age of fifteen years is not recorded, beat a heart of ridiculous tenderness.

In compiling his biography for the public (the fashion of editing living celebrities, whether political, musical, or dramatic, has now completely won the day), I have fallen into the habit of visualising my hero at all stages of his existence, while he was running about in the absurd sack-petticoat which Mr. McManus thought so reprehensible, while he scrabbled inarticulate at school, and during the intervening period between the blow on the Dominie's nose and the return of Jessie McLure to Tuchan, while he was working in the Stone-Quarries.

I see him there, a boy among grown men, sitting on a boulder and staring, as if with a prophetic instinct, down the huge valley of Calder, where the great grey stones lay like sleeping cattle, towards the Pass of Ballandarroch and the two huge sentinels More and Moich. One can form no guess as to the actual thoughts which passed through the brain under that tangled red head, cannot say whether the remotest idea came to him that Destiny called him away from the little village, where he had been

so unhappy, to the great world, which lay beyond the Pass and which Dr. Spens had renounced, whether as yet he (however dimly) realised how much honour this same great world would one day pay him.

Doubtless, had you told him that ten years hence his name would be known from Moscow to Minnesota, from Rouen to Rio Janeiro, he would naturally enough not have understood one word you were saying, and yet an intangible foreboding of his fate and the unalterable decree, that by the very nature of things sets abnormal beings apart from all real companionship, however much more than their ordinary fellow-creatures they may ache and long for it (the unrealisable), had begun to fix the melancholy, which would never leave it henceforth, in his soul.

O Jim Giganticule, soft-hearted Monsterlet, Titan-in-Trousers to be, — take the pick and hew the stone from the living rock, bedew your young brow with honest sweat, do a man's work with a boy's hands, and think perhaps that your bones will be laid to rest in Tuchan churchyard with a rough head-stone to commemorate your simple virtues and obliterate your simple defects. Cling with all the tenderness of your soft nature to the hills you have known from boyhood, wander sadly through the village streets that scorn you (O! these cruel Jims drawn upon the white-washed walls), wince as the little children fly shrieking from your lumbering form, try to live down that reputation for wickedness which covers you more than your own ragged garments, — it is all in vain. Forces within you, Forces outside you, the network of Circumstance, the long arm of Fate are combined against you. However much you love home and the hills down which the torrents run shouting in the time of rain, whose venerable sides are scored with innumerable watercourses, upon whose summits the clouds rest and the wind moans perpetually — however much your natural shyness impels

you towards a desire to remain obscure and happy (and you are now just at an age when you are beginning to think of these things), there is deep buried within you a force of which you are yet hardly cognisant, a force that makes those who possess it, always unhappy and always restless. O Jim, miserrime Giganticule! The Red Mist came into your eyes for the first time when Jessie McLure struck you; that is three years ago, nearly four now. Since then you have worked amidst the Stone-Quarries and the fatal Red Mist has not once dimmed your vision; hardly has your heart given one really tumultuous thump during the time in which your body and mind have both developed. Let us survey these years.

In the first place the Dominie's nose was a sight for days. In the second, there was no school the afternoon that Jim struck Autocracy on its one vulnerable point, for even Mr. Maitland could not keep order with — with an "idjured dose"; even his powers of sarcasm were not equal to such a feat. Besides, Johnny Findlater lay, sadly wounded, on the pedagogic bed and needed all attention. Dr. Spens was at Mrs. Simpson's, and the small boy Angus, deputed to find him, had no difficulty in accomplishing his task. "Dr. Spens, you're wanted at the schule-house."

"Some one ill?" inquired the Doctor casually.

"Ou — aye," answered the urchin, and as he trotted along by the Doctor's side, Angus, with all the small boy's love for imparting news, especially news of a dreadful character, told the story in his own way.

"I'm thinkin' Johnny Findlater's dead the noo," he said suddenly.

"Dead!" exclaimed the Doctor. "Good Heavens! What's the matter?"

"He was a' white and his heid was a mass of bluid," said the urchin triumphantly, "an' he never spoke a word

a' the time an' when Mrs. Jones cairried him into the schule-house, my, his airms and legs were as limp as rags. An' Jessie McLure said he was deid, sure as death, she did, an' she was greetin', an' —"

"Steady, Angus, my man," said the Doctor as he hurried on as fast as his legs would carry him, "steady and begin with the right end of the stick. What's happened? How did Johnny meet with his accident?"

"Jim Macdonald broke his heid wi' a stane," replied the urchin carelessly and reverted once more with enthusiasm to the horrors of the spectacle, "an' his mouth was open like a bit fush's (he made a grimace to show what he meant) an' he loked gashly white, — an' — an' I'm sure he's deid." He drew in his breath with a whistle at the recollection.

"Jim Macdonald broke his head with a stone," cried the Doctor horror-struck.

"Ou — aye," replied the urchin carelessly as before. Now Dr. Spens was as unprejudiced as most men, and had, for the sake of old times (you remember he had helped Jim into the world with considerable trouble to himself and certainly saved his life in the whooping-cough), a certain tenderness for our red-headed Giganticulus, but rumour of Jim's sullen disposition and obvious inutility, if not worse, had reached as far as the House on the Road to the Stone-Quarries. Perhaps, owing to the circumstances mentioned above, he took more interest in Jim than in the other village boys, and certainly his was a figure you would not overlook if you once saw it; at any rate the idea that he was a bad character, or developing into one, stuck in his mind with a certain amount of sorrow. He had been thinking over it that very day, the good Doctor, and now the very worst confirmation of all his fears and a dreadful tragedy to boot! Fair-haired, blue-eyed Johnny Findlater was the show-boy of the village.

He was to do great things, and here he was seriously injured apparently, if not dead, and his injury was at the hands of the wicked Jim. Little things have serious consequences, and it was just this careless statement of a small boy acting on the perturbation of the Doctor's mind that lost Jim his only supporter in Tuchan. Little Angus was too much interested in the catastrophe itself to explain the causes of it. Probably his infantile mind could not anyhow have given a connected and intelligible account, but the first news of it came to the Doctor that way and his initial impressions were wholly to Jim's detriment.

They hurried down the road towards the school-house, Angus keeping up with the Doctor's strides with difficulty, and at a bend of the road met a cloud of children, laughing and shouting joyously.

At the sight of the Doctor and his anxious face their spirits were a little dashed.

"How's Johnny?" he asked.

"We dinna ken. We hae na seen him. He's in the Dominie's room lyin' doon."

The Doctor pressed forward once more. Little Angus turned round to the departing boys and girls.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Where are ye gaein'?"

"There's nae mair schule the day. Angus ye sud see the Dominie's neb. It's swelled like a tomaty an' Jim Macdonald's rin awa'."

The band passed, joyous once more, down the road, happy, egotistical, unimaginative children. For an instant Angus wavered. Should he join his playfellows — there could be splendid games on this unexpected holiday — or should he go forward with the Doctor? His appetite for horrors gained the day. There was a chance of seeing "a corp" and, at any rate, the Dominie's "neb swelled up like a tomaty," the reason of which fascinating occur-

rence he could not guess. In another moment the Doctor opened the door of the yard and passed into the ill-lit classroom with its grimy windows and battered desks.

"Maitland!" he called.

The Dominie made his appearance at the door behind his desk which led into his private quarters. Angus stared at him fascinated.

The long flexible nose, which always seemed to give an extra point to the Dominie's sarcasms, was bulbous at the end and still dripped blood every other second, which Mr. Maitland vainly endeavoured to staunch with a crimsoned pocket handkerchief.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Dr. Spens, as this sorry spectacle met his eyes. "What has happened to you, Maitland?"

"A trifling accident," answered the Dominie with a flinch. "But first of a' come and see Johnny Findlater. I'm thankfu' to say he's no as sairously hurt as I thought. The boy's recovered consciousness and feels no evil effects forbye a headache."

Angus followed the pair into the sacred quarters whither he had never penetrated before, his eyes fixed in admiration on the "Dominie's neb." However much he might be disappointed to find that Jimmy Findlater was "not deid" or even seriously hurt, his appetite for horrors was momentarily satisfied by that bulbous dripping nose. Moreover the mystery of it was shortly to be explained. In truth it had been a wild and exciting day in the school annals (thought Angus), which had, owing to the recent slump in "Jim-baits," been rather tame lately. As for Dr. Spens, he found a severe cut in Johnny's head, the boy himself sick and dizzy, but otherwise little the worse. At the foot of the Dominie's bed Jessie McLure was sitting, her pretty dark face streaked with tears. She was holding Johnny's hand.

"There's not much the matter with him," said the Doctor cheerily, and at that Jessie's face lighted up. "I'll send him back home in my gig. Who'll run and tell Donald to bring it round? You, Angus? you, Jessie?"

"I'll gae, Dr. Spens," said the little girl, as she jumped off the bed with tossing black hair. "I'll rin as fast as I can." She disappeared with all the swiftness of her impulsive nature, much to the relief of Angus, who, with one eye fixed on the pale face of Johnny Findlater and the other on the red nose of the Dominie, determined to see the situation through and hear all there was to be heard.

"And now," said the Doctor, "pray what has happened? Angus, here, told me something of the story but I find it hard to believe. Was Jim Macdonald really wicked enough to fling a stone at Johnny's head? Why, he might have killed him!"

Johnny gave a sympathetic sniff at this reminder of his mortality, and Mr. Maitland replied:

"Likely enough, Spens. Angus told you the truth. Jim Macdonald is an utterly worthless boy, a thorough-paced young scoundrel."

He told the story of the catastrophe to Johnny as briefly as possible, with every now and then an appeal for confirmation to one of the two boys. Johnny was naturally not going to give away his own part in the affair and Angus was still too much fascinated by the sight of the "Dominie's neb" to throw in more than a casual "ou aye."

"And so you see, Spens," continued the Dominie, "the boy is utterly worthless, hopeless, untidy, sullen, an' dangerous. He winna work and he winna play. He never joined in the other children's games but a'ways stood scowling in a corner. Didn't he, Johnny?"

"Yes, Sir," with a sniff.

"Ou — aye," from Angus.

"An' I tell you the sicht of him to-day when I came

into the yaird and found puir Johnny there lying on the ground (another sniff), face downward (two sniffs), at Jim Macdonald's maircy (a sob), if I hadna chanced to come in, fair frichtened me. I never saw such a look on a boy's face yet in my experience of boys — flushed face, glittering eyes, convulsive breathing. He's not safe to mix wi' other laddies. He's wicked, mad, cairried awa' wi' his ane evil nature. I've done my best for him. Five years he's been under my control and I can say truthfully he's become waur every year. Isna that the truth, Johnny?"

"Yes, Sir." (Another sob.)

"H'm — H'm —" muttered Dr. Spens, very much distressed at this dreadful story and the unanimity of opinion regarding Jim. "Wretched lad! I heard something of the kind before. I'm sorry, very sorry he has such bad tendencies. Very sorry, indeed. And now, Maitland, you *must* let me have a look at your nose. It seems to be still bleeding. How in the world did —?"

The sarcastic Dominic flushed up to the roots of his grizzled hair. He was a little man with a long nose, and little men with long noses are always vain. Never, if his own wishes had been consulted, need the subject have been referred to again, but with the damage self-evident and the question repeated point-blank, apart from the unimpeachable evidence of five and thirty school-children, how was any attempt at concealment possible? Best out with the truth at once! He could show the most flattering case for himself, if he was the first to tell the story.

"It was (a pause) — was Jim," said he, flushing once more.

Angus drew in his breath till it whistled. He was in ecstasy.

"Jim again!" cried the Doctor.

"When I tried to tak' him into custody," said the

Dominie rapidly, "tried to punish him for his abominable behaviour, his cruelty to Johnny, his monstrous uncontrollable temper, his attempted crime, what do you think the wicked revengeful boy had the — the — the unpaired insolence to — to do —"

"He dunted ye on the neb," shrieked Angus in an outburst of unrestrainable excitement. "My, the laddies were richt. It's swelled up like a tomaty, sure as death."

Alas! we all have to pay for our pleasures, if we plunge into them too headlong. Poor Angus suffered dreadfully.

CHAPTER XVII

WHILE the last remnant of Jim's reputation was being torn to shreds in the school-house, our friend, Giganticulus ferox, was having more adventures.

You remember how, mad with rage, wild with triumph, and sick with misery — in all this chaos of emotions — and with his red hair in tangled unkempt masses, his eyes glittering, and his freckled face inflamed, he burst through the yard door, whooping, and turned away from Tuchan. He ran and whooped, whooped and ran for about a quarter-of-a-mile of road. For the present, in all this chaos of emotions, the feeling of triumph was uppermost. That punch on the Dominie's long flexible nose had left him with a delicious sensation, both physical and mental, and the sight of Johnny lying on the ground, felled by his hand after all the petty cruelties and insults of five years, was actually present to him as he ran whooping. That well-aimed stone had destroyed the illusion of time. He flung it over and over again in the next ten minutes and again and again saw angel-faced Virtue throw up his arms and fall to the ground. His vengeance was complete.

For the moment he even forgot about Jessie McLure, forgot that this vengeance-carrying stone has struck her as well as Johnny, that Jessie will never forgive, however long the years, even if Johnny may.

The Red Mist still shrouded his vision and he was still conscious of an almost superhuman strength. So he ran, whooping, and, round the bend, came plump on the Rev. Simon McManus.

The Minister stopped astonished as the tattered, red-headed hobbledehoy (Jim looked a good five years older than his age), drunken with the power of its own emotions, came towards him, shouting. The Minister's white face frowned; stern disapproval, his lower lips protruded ominously, balancing rebuke, his square white hand made a peremptory gesture.

"Stop, Jim Macdonald," he said. "Stop at once. Where are you off to at this hour, when you should be at school? What are you shouting about?"

Jim came to a halt, swaying from side to side. He was really drunken with the strong wine of vengeance. He smiled derisively at the white-faced, frowning McManus.

"I'm gaein' as I please, an' I'll shout as I please."

The Minister was nearly a head taller than Jim, and so he looked down upon him a little. When, however, he saw the glittering eyes and inflamed face and noticed the convulsive breathing, he drew back a step, and when he heard the defiant answer, still another.

"Are — you — mad, Jim Macdonald?" he said, poisoning the words on his lower lip in his habitually impressive manner.

Jim put his hands on the haunches of his baggy corduroy breeches and smiled still more derisively with a wicked light in his eyes.

"Mebbe," he said. "I dinna ken. Onyway, Meenister, ye'd better tak' heed."

The Reverend Simon became very angry, so angry that for a moment he forgot that a certain quiet dignity befits the priestly frock best, unless the owner is in a position to support strong words by strong deeds.

"You rebellious, insolent young rascal," he shouted. "I'll teach you to give me any of your impertinence." Moving forward he stretched out his hand to seize Jim's collar, even as the Dominie had done. "Come back to

the school at once and I'll tell Mr. Maitland to give you a taste of the tawse you shall remember."

"Hands off, Meenister," cried Jim, with that first sense of his power still strong upon him, the power upon the hour. "The Dominie's got a bluidy neb — 'twas me that gave it him. I've half-killed Johnny Findlater and I'm dangerous. If ye touch me, by God, I'll sairve ye the very same way. Hands off, forbye ye want a bluidy neb too. Hands off, by God!"

The oath, the infuriated face of the boy, the sudden rebellion struck the Minister aback and, as he hesitated, Jim passed him and ran up the road. The Reverend Simon watched him go in a state of stupefaction. He, the Minister, had been defied, defied by the boy who he had always said would turn out knave and rascal, defied in sight of the Manse. Tho' by no means partial to Alexander, a sullen impertinent man, he had borne his insolence in the quiet Christian spirit enjoined on Ministers of the Gospel. "Jim — Jim — Jim, however," the name was stuttered aloud in his fury. Well, well, that should be seen to, and such a wilful and monstrous defiance of sacred authority punished with all the severity it deserved. And then, as if with the force of a sudden revelation, Jim's tidings struck him motionless. "Maitland . . . young Findlater . . . injured . . . half-killed. What! . . . How! . . . Impossible." He stood with lip shot forth and white forehead furrowed. Incredible! Yet . . . what defiance and assurance lay in the rascal's great bawling voice! If it was true Oh! Jim Macdonald. . . .

As for the culprit, still *Giganticulus ferox*, he ran down the road, passed the red walls of the manse garden with its little wood of firs, turned up a narrow track between stone walls and thin pastures, and made straight for the hills. Triumph still sang her song within him and he vibrated with the strong music like a harp to the wind. It

was his habit, in the stress of any vital emotion, to make for the hills. Upon the hills he breathed, got for a little while out of the inimical atmosphere of Tuchan. There was a place whence could be viewed, on one hand, the great valley of Calder as far as the Pass, and the track like a little thread climbing through the forests of firs; on the other, the village of Tuchan with, beyond it, the still, narrow waters of the loch, the ragged island of Ruish with its bare precipitous bluffs and sparsely clothed slopes, and again beyond, in his imagination, the Atlantic. Thither, to this lofty place, under the shadow of a birch-wood, he had often taken his sorrows. From the height and amidst the vast mountainous country and shining lochs, with the immeasurable Atlantic in hail, the village looked absurdly insignificant. How could a thing so petty hurt one who was in communion with the great hills and sea, he would ask himself, and thus, from a kind of childish philosophy, managed to gain comfort when his child's world went hard. So, to-day, whither so many times he had climbed dolefully, should he not also climb rejoicing? He laid himself down therefore in the accustomed place, with his tangled red head between his hands; but lo! as he gazed down upon the straggling little village of cottages with white-washed walls and thatched roofs, the triumph, which had seemed to him so great, suddenly became small, as everything connected with Tuchan did, when seen from that great height.

Foolish Jim, or perhaps wise Jim — wise in the natural simplicity which was always and still is part of your character — had you been a hair-splitting, futile philosopher like him who writes your biography, you must have known this would be the only and inevitable result of your triumph-wander to the eyrie in the hills. Had you wished your revenge to loom large in your memory, overshadow your boyish years with gloomy conquering wings, you should

have stayed in the narrow untidy ways of Tuchan, among small-minded men and women, boys and girls of nice, ordinary, comfortable, unremarkable size. You should not have lifted up your eyes to the hills or walked with your feet upon the mountains.

And now the Red Mist faded before his eyes; the feeling of unnatural strength left him; and he became as weak as water. That fire of triumph in his heart turned to ashes, and once more he became shy, sensitive, stupid Jim with terrors thronging in upon him and clamouring. So for a long time he lay there helpless, and then, as the evening sun began setting through banks of crimson and green over Ruish, arose staggering and went down the hillside to Tuchan.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE sun was set before he came to the end of his path, and turned into the road which ran along the lochside to the village. He passed the Manse and saw a light shining in the windows, glowing, a bright red spark, amidst the surrounding dark of the firs. The road led uphill and, with the heaviness of his spirit, it seemed steeper than it really was. He was going back to the old life of shame and insult without the sense of superhuman strength that had given him courage that afternoon, without the Red Mist before his eyes.

He saw everything, felt everything under more crushing relations than the old; had become, as it were, completely subordinate to circumstance instead of master of it; for the very fact of having known the strange power which had come for the first time into his life, made him doubly feeble and inert now it had deserted him.

Giganticulus ferox was tamed and, like an imprisoned lion, he must henceforth be half-content with memories of the desert and ancient freedom and the forgotten strength of his tawny limbs. Jim was going back to his cage.

Henceforward the dreamy look into measureless spaces is always in his eyes and a remote inexplicable melancholy in his soul — always, that is, until the Red Mist veils his vision again and the feeling of superhuman strength fills him once more.

One sees how it was that Jim did not run away to sea or enlist as a drummer-boy or do any of the things that a more energetic lad might have done. Without the Red Mist and the accompanying sensations, which lifted him,

as it were, above the common herd, he had no initiative at all, was a powerless, submissive, utterly useless Giganticulus, one even completely dependent on the people he hated and who hated him, one who had no strength to tear himself away from the surroundings he had known since memory began, one who must go back and be a useless encumbrance to peevish hard-working Alexander and feeble, querulous Euphemia. Between them and him the rift seemed to have so widened that it was now become a chasm.

Jim blundered heavily up the road, feeling utterly exhausted in body and mind, too tired for any sensation. He did not even pause as he came to the entrance of the village. Destiny was driving him back and he was too tired, too tired to do anything but submit and blunder heavily home.

Supper was just over in the cottages. It was a warm evening in June and, while the wives and grown-up daughters washed up in the kitchen, the quarrymen were sitting in the doorways smoking their pipes and talking from house to house. There was but one topic of conversation — Jim. The evening was propitious to romance. The evening star burnt low in the blue vault and almost alone in the heavens. No wind blew, and there was an absolute silence of nature, except for the far-away wash of the Atlantic against the rockbound coast of Ruish. It was a night indeed to stir even the most infinitesimal imagination, and remember please that the natives of Tuchan were nearly all Celts.

The school-children had carried the story through the village and wives and daughters had all been bursting to impart it in turn to husbands and brothers, when they came home from the Quarries. Once generally hinted it ran like wild-fire down the long thin street of Tuchan, was the only topic of conversation at supper, smoked

too in silence with the first after-supper pipe. Each quarryman sat in the lighted quadrilateral of his doorway staring at Hesperus diamond-bright in the dark-blue west and occasionally ejaculating, "Heuch," or "Sakes," as the marvellous story of Jim attained to greater heights of the marvellous in his mind. Once more our Giganticulus had become a prodigy, the prodigy of an hour. Thus the story, lifted by the beauty of that blue evening into a strange romance, shaped itself in each astonished mind. "Jim had tried to kill Johnny Findlater in a sudden, violent fit of madness, broken the Dominie's nose, grossly insulted and threatened the Rev. Simon McManus, whom he had escaped by superior speed of foot, and run away high into the mountains. The Minister had seen him climbing the hills behind the Manse and jouking in among the firs with the agility of one possessed. He had always been a moody, bad-tempered bairn and the madness must suddenly have seized him. How lucky he had injured none of the little anes! Every mother ought to be thankful that the wicked, sullen wretch had not struck, kicked, pushed, mauled, maimed, or otherwise ill-treated one of her own children. He was not a bit sorry for his attempted crime, had even seemed to glory in it when talking to the Minister, who had heard him shouting in his great bawling voice on the hilltops. What an unexpected and terrible event in the quiet annals of Tuchan! Jim had probably run away to Duke's Ferry, to find a place as cabin-boy on board a ship. A good riddance too! (cried all the mothers). He wouldn't be able to bully anybody on board ship but get the welting he thoroughly deserved. He did deserve it—certain. Johnny Findlater could give no reason for Jim's brutality, neither could Jessie McLure. Before going home to Calder's Farm in her father's gig, she had flung far and wide words eloquent of Jim's wickedness. He could not submit to

even a little good-humoured fun, but with all the sudden malignity of his disposition tried to murder Johnny and would probably have tried to murder some of the others, if the Dominie had not come back in the nick of time. He had pushed her down and cut her elbow. Oh! no, it didn't ache much now, but she scorned a hideous great lout like Jim, who was not content with flinging stones at other boys, but must also push about and hurt girls. It was very sad for Macdonald and his wife to have such a bairn, the others were all peaceable and good-tempered. Alas! there were black sheep in most families, though Tuchan was on the whole a well-behaved little village. Had anyone been to the Macdonalds' cottage? Yes. Mrs. McIntosh had looked in with a few words of consolation ready, but Alexander seemed as glum as a pick-axe and Euphemia was greetin' sair — No wonder, puir body! The Minister and the Doctor had both been there, wanting to know if Jim had come home, and, if so, demanding that he should be delivered for punishment. They had gone away, the Minister in great anger, the Doctor a hantle downcast, when they discovered that Jim had not returned. Did Alexander say anything? He shut the door in Mrs. McIntosh's face (ou — aye), and told her to go to the deil. Mrs. McIntosh was sair affrontit."

Aweel (thought everybody), Jim was off, off on the high seas most likely, off to America and everyone was well rid of him, including his family. Romance played the deuce with Celtic imaginations: nothing less than the "high seas" could be the fate of Jim after his strange defiance of order, authority, and morals. "Aweel, Jim's awa'," thought the quarryman in the last cottage, as he sat in his lighted quadrilateral of a doorway, and knocked out the ashes of his pipe before filling a second. Suddenly, however, he became aware of a big, shambling, but youthful figure lumbering up the road, lifting each foot as if it

had a weight on it, staggering with a kind of inhuman fatigue. The quarryman stared. The shambling figure came nearer and he saw it was that hero of romantic villainy, Jim, coming back to Tuchan at nightfall.

"He is come back," cried McIntosh to the kitchen.

"Who?"

"Who if it was not Jim Macdonald," replied the quarryman. Dish-cloth in hand, Mrs. McIntosh ran out and stared at the unconscious Jim, lumbering along under the great weight of Destiny, too tired to feel sorrow, anger, fear, or remorse, too tired for anything. "He is come back," cried McIntosh to his next door neighbour, a fisherman. "Who?" "Who if it was not Jim Macdonald." In his voice, his trumpet-toned voice, with which he contended against the roar of wind and waves, the fisherman shouted the news down the main street of Tuchan. Every lighted quadrilateral filled with men, boys, and women; the little children, Jim's school-fellows, Angus still smarting under the Dominie's rod, heard in their beds and rushed out, shirted or otherwise; Mrs. Findlater at the Post Office, sitting by the injured Johnny's bed, rose and crossed to the doorway; the narrow mounting street filled with wondering folk, but, still unconscious that anyone watched him, Jim lumbered on, turning his head neither to the right or to the left. Men, pipe in hand, followed him with their eyes but spoke no word; women whispered and chattered to each other, but spoke no word aloud; children, awed by the silence of their seniors, spoke no word; only Mrs. Findlater, a short brisk little woman, as Jim hove in sight with down-bent head and painful walk, cried in a shrill voice, "Kill my bairn, wad ye?" and picking up the nearest weapon handy, a toasting-fork dashed upon him with all the speed of her strong, short little legs. "Kill my bairn, wad ye?" she cried again, lifting the toasting-fork, and the village looked

on silent and motionless. "Kill my bairn, wad ye?" she cried again with the toasting-fork lifted. Jim stopped (the tangled red curls were bare) and looked down on the little woman with an indescribably mournful and vacant expression, which had in it no vestige of recognition, "What was ye wantin'?" he asked in a feeble voice.

"Did ye try to kill my bairn?" said Mrs. Findlater, "ye wicked, cruel, murderous lad!"

"I dinna ken," replied Jim. Mrs. Findlater in a fury brought down the toasting-fork with all the strength of her strong thin arm, — swack — raised it again — swack. Shrieking shrill abuse, she belaboured Jim. With hands at side and red head bent our mournful Giganticulus stood passive, motionless, as the blows descended and the wire toasting-fork coiled, biting, round his unwieldy body. The village looked on. No one came between the outraged mother and the boy who hurt her son. No one moved or said a word as the dim woman's figure belaboured with sounding blows the dim, big, hobbledehoy figure. Hesperus, diamond-bright in the forehead of the dark-blue vault, twinkled exquisite peace over the little ugly scene of strife. Swack — swack — swack — came Mrs. Findlater's blows. A sound of running feet pattered nearer and nearer thro' the still night air and another woman's figure came swiftly down the hill.

Jim heard nothing, saw nothing, did not even feel the toasting-fork writhing cruelly round him. Mrs. Findlater, absorbed in her vengeance and shrilling abuse, heard nothing. Only the village saw the approaching figure and remained motionless. It was Euphemia, breathless, raining tears, choking with sobs. "Jim — my son — you come home — Jim, lad — Jim — Oh! my bonny big bairn." Feeble, chicken-brained Euphemia, Euphemia filled for once with a great passion, the passion of the mother who thought her son lost and has found him again. With her

left hand she struck Mrs. Findlater's chest and pushed her away, toasting-fork and all — it fell with a tinkle on the dimly shining road — and then flung her arms round Jim's neck, as, hardly conscious, he bent his mournful eyes on the ground.

"Jim — lad," she choked, as she hung upon him, "we a' (sob) thocht ye'd (sob) rin awa'. Winna ye speak? Tell your puir auld mither ye love her."

Had he not been tired to death, too tired for any feeling, had he not temporarily lost all his sensations with the departure of the new strength that had been his for a while, shy, sensitive Jim would have been overwhelmed by something worse than confusion, even 'plunged into the abyss of shame by such a public display of maternal feeling. Women, however, especially mothers, do not understand this modesty natural to the male sex, whether sons, husbands, or brothers. Women let loose their feelings of every kind *coram publico*, whether they are inflamed by ire like Mrs. Findlater or overcome with joyful sorrow like Euphemia. Women (God bless 'em or — but it is not the intention of the present scribe to state whether he adores, execrates, despises, or views with gentle tolerance the sex. A wise man once said, "I keep my religion and my opinion of women to myself and every other wise man in the world does the same and holds the same views as I do) — women (to resume) let the steam escape with a rush and cannot keep it to drive the engine, and so they are apt to think men hard-hearted, whereas — but we must really follow our sage's example and stick to narrative. Jim, then, would normally have been overcome with confusion, if not worse, at the overwhelming pathos of Euphemia's welcome. As it was he just lifted a lack-lustre eye and whispered:

"Mither."

"Aye — laddie — laddie Jim — your mither who's hairt

is filled with joy to see you ance mair. Come awa' hame, dearest laddie." With flashing eyes and heaving bosom, burning with the fury of the mother who fights for her offspring, the chicken-headed Euphemia turned on Mrs. Findlater, whose sentiments were oddly enough just the same as her own. But there was no room for a philosophical outlook in those two maternal brains. "Mrs. Findlater," cried Euphemia, drawing herself up to her full height of five feet three inches. "Mrs. Macdonald," answered the post-mistress, erecting all her five feet two and a half inches of stature. Euphemia spurned the toasting-fork with her foot, as she wound an arm round Jim's waist, pressed the ungainly overgrown body in tattered clothing to her own. "Mrs. Findlater," she cried in a voice as shrill as that of the woman she addressed, and making the most of the extra half inch of height, "I daur ye to lay finger on my bairn again. Chastise your ain snivelling, whey-faced, tow-haired, lassie of a bairn, if ye wull. He'd tak' nae hairm from bein' treated mair like a lad and less like a lassie. I wad be shamed to have a bairn wha could anely paddle about wi' books and writin' and sic-like trash. Huh! sic a clamjamfry for a wee cut o' the heid. It makes me fair shamed. Huh! nae spunk ava' — a lassie not a lad — a tow-haired lassie."

The village still looked from its doorways waiting to see if the quarrel would end in blows, while Mrs. Findlater, unable to find any answer to this unexpected attack for a moment or two, toised the hysterical Euphemia up and down, feeling the disadvantage of that extra half inch of height. She, unabashed, returned glances of equal scorn, while our Giganticulus remained an inert lump as if wholly unconscious of this almost Homeric feminine combat. Silence reigned for a few moments, tho' each woman seemed itching to pull the other's hair and the village prepared to separate the two, if necessary. "Come awa' hame, Jim

laddie," said Euphemia at last, "an' leave Mrs. Findlater to daut on her beautiful, precious Johnny. There's a nice bit o' supper I'll pit on for ye." She took Jim's arm and mother and son passed up the village street towards their own cottage, leaving Mrs. Findlater breathless and momentarily outmatched. "It wasna that Jim minded your fulish little cuts wi' the fork," shouted back Euphemia, "truth he hardly felt them. He isna like your Johnny, he's a grit, strong, weel-grown laddie wi' bluid in his veins, not milk — not milk." A hysterical laugh rang down the street as the cottage-door of the Macdonalds closed behind her. "— and naethin' ava' in his heid," shrieked Mrs. Findlater too late, "forbye a peck of idle, useless, wicked, fashious, unchancy pliskies; a doited red-heided cuif! a skellum fit for naethin' but tae pit meat in his kyte and spoil his duds! clarty and crankous an' dirty! wha'll jauk and squattle wi' callets and louns an' gawkies an' gangrels an' dyvors an' live to be hangit. That for your snash, Mrs. Macdonald." With all her fine and lady-like manners forgotten, the post-mistress shrilled abuse in the broadest Scotch, of which, with all due apologies to that hardy race, a rendering is attempted above. But the door of the Macdonalds' cottage was closed and nothing answered but an echo of mocking laughter.

Thus ended the combat over the body of the returned prodigal. For the next three-quarters of an hour the village expended its energies in wordy argument, the conclusion of which was that Jim was everything Mrs. Findlater miscalled him and would end as she prophesied. Upon which charitable judgment the village bade itself good-night and went to bed.

Overhead in the dark blue vault legions of stars twinkled with unalterable beauty, waiting for the rising of the moon.

CHAPTER XIX

IT rose swiftly close upon midnight, bathing hills and rivers, islands and lochs in a wonderful half-light more romantic than that of day, till all save the larger stars at the limits of the horizon vanished, and from its stronghold in the middle heavens surveyed the tiny hamlet of Tuchan where all fears and hopes and passions were now laid to rest. Alexander had grumbled himself into unconsciousness some two hours ago. Euphemia, worn out with the hysteria of joy and anger, was uneasily asleep dreaming that Jim, once more a baby, but in cocked hat and epaulettes, had knocked down Mr. McManus beside the font and was saying good-bye before taking command of the Fleet. As for Jim, himself, too tired to eat, he had thrown himself into bed, unconscious of the past, heedless of the future. Dominies, ministers, Mrs. Findlater's toasting-forks, grumbling gloomy fathers, excitable weeping mothers, faded away after one flash as he drowned helplessly in the great sea of annihilation called sleep.

The moon shed its wan searching light through the narrow window under which he lay and palely illumined the tired freckled face with tangled red locks falling all round it. Then, as if fearing that the light might wake him from the rest he needed so much, a cloud, an inky black cloud, which had been gradually creeping over the heavens, covered the inquisitive face of Lady Moon, and Jim, who had stirred uneasily once or twice, relapsed into absolute, almost breathless quiet. Sleep, sleep, freckled Endymion! A little wind began to moan round the chim-

neys of the hamlet and a few drops of rain pattered down. The voice of the wind grew stronger and the inky black cloud came on till it stood right over Tuchan, covering three-quarters of the sky with a pall. Down came the rain in good earnest—it was now about five o'clock in the morning—hissed over the waters of the loch, whipped the street with countless arrows, struck, in a moment, the last glimmering distances from view.

When the various households rose for the business of the day, the spell laid upon them by the romantic blue and silver of yesterday evening had passed. Everything was clinging-damp and misty-grey. The violence of the storm had gone, but a drizzling veil obscured the mountains from view and seemed to shut the inhabitants of Tuchan in upon themselves, without a hint of the majesty of opened heavens, lonely heathery mountains, a larger, mysterious world. Even the waters of the loch below the village looked dreary.

The mind of Tuchan was changed with the changed mind of Nature. Everyone felt glum, uncomfortable, stupid, and fretful. Jim—certainly any romance connected with him—was forgotten. His adventures had become almost commonplace and insipid. The Macdonald family woke like the rest of the village: Alexander peevish and gloomy, gloomier than ever about Jim; Euphemia with the first hysterical gladness at finding the lost turned into drab anxiety as to the future of the found; Jim with a sickly *katzenjammer* upon him. It seemed almost incredible to our Giganticulus, restored to his ordinary mild and innocuous disposition, that the events of the previous day could have been real. Jim was, I suppose, something of a coward. At any rate he was without the power of continuous, unhesitating, ruthless action. He always had to look back! And now he wondered whether, after all, the petty oppressions, which he suffered at school,

warranted such a mad outburst on his part, whether they were not due to his own feeble nature.

For a moment he fairly shivered with apprehension in the clear morning sanity of his mind, the sanity that came with a body cooled a little below blood-heat, by the unnatural fatigues of the previous day.

That vague sense of the unreality of everything, of the absence of necessity for anything, that was to haunt him henceforward till the day when the Red Mist came before his eyes again and the sense of unnatural strength filled him once more, was strong upon him, when he awoke.

Something had, perhaps, been torn from him in the stress of that fierce outburst of passion, but yesterday seemed a dream, to-day another dream, to-morrow the shadow of a dream.

Euphemia called him that morning with everything practical in her nature awake and nearly everything romantic vanished.

She remained affectionate, but for such a feeble, querulous body was almost stern. Jim must begin to pay for his sins and misdemeanours (that much was evident to her with the others). Yet, even as she informed him, "Your faither wushes to speak wi' ye afore he goes to the Quarries," she thought the lad looked very tired still, and determined to make a specially good breakfast. It was a meal taken, but without that phenomenal appetite which continued to be Alexander's despair. In fact only two bowls of porridge, three slices of bacon, and four bits of bread were absorbed.

"Jim, my man, you're no eating," said his mother; "are ye no weel?"

"Hoots! He's lucky to hae ony kind of a meal," said his father, fixing a gloomy eye on the culprit. "Was I not hearing somebody last nicht talking about an idle skellum guid for naethin' but crammin' his kyte."

The allusion was lost upon our young friend, but melancholy surged over him as he remembered his ineffectiveness. The old sorrowful question began to haunt him once more, "Why was he not the same as everyone else? If he had been an ordinary bairn with average, capable intelligence, all this need never have happened."

As it was he was just clumsy, overgrown, red-headed Jim, at a loss for an answer, helpless, useless. What his father said was true. He could do nothing except devour food. A great resolution came to him. Henceforward he would eat no more than anyone else. No one could accuse him then of "crammin' his kyte." Shyness, his powerful enemy, forbade him to speak, but, O Jim, it was a great resolution though undoubtedly on the wrong lines, a resolution horse-after-cart, as if one should determine to walk upon his hands, because he paced quicker than all others. Yet, in some ways, it was a great resolution.

The Giganticulus remained thus silent, but pondering mighty things. To a father, however, who expected his son to make some humble confession of bad behaviour, such silence seemed only sullenness and obstinacy. Yet speak this strange fellow could not, however much he tried, and Alexander lost the little patience that remained to him.

"Ye sit there like a gawkie an' say naethin'," he cried in a sudden burst of anger, "but tell me now what are we to do wi' ye? Ye winna work at the schule and, my sakes, can ye gae back after yesterday? Ye've half-killed a bairn, struck the Dominie, abused the Meenister. Iss there onything ye havena done except your duty? I canna think sic a bairn is oors. What are we to do wi' ye?"

"I dinna ken," replied Jim, and bowed his head lower as he felt the tears well into his eyes, and realised how useless and helpless he was. "Ye dinna ken! Ye dinna ken!" cried Alexander violently. "I hate the wumman

but I overhaird some of her obsairvations last nicht an' I'm thinkin' they may be no sae far wrang. Mrs. Findlater —"

"Wheesht," said Euphemia, firing up in-her turn, "I'll no hear that wumman's name mentioned in my hoose. Of a' —"

"I'll mention who I please," rejoined Alexander, red in the face and with whiskers bristling.

"No before me," replied Euphemia and burst into tears. Alexander sat furious at the interruption and furious with his wife for "greeting." He glowered and thumped the table; inarticulately, explosively stuttered. As for Jim, the Giganticulus sat plunged in deeper despair than ever. Wherever he came, thought he, there was discord. The tears poured down his freckled cheeks, and yet his ridiculous, phenomenal shyness, shyness quite and absolutely proportioned to that phenomenal frame, forbade him saying one single tiny word of either contrition, apology, or excuse. Suddenly, after one peremptory knock upon the door, the Reverend Simon McManus burst in upon this pleasant family party.

CHAPTER XX

THE Minister bore evident signs of haste. His white cheek was unshorn, and his white brow wet with perspiration.

"So," he said, addressing the culprit without a word of greeting to Euphemia or Alexander. "So, Jim Macdonald, you're home at last. Happily, the stone-breaker told my cook you came back last night. Wicked boy, I suppose you thought to escape the punishment you deserve by running away. I suspected as much, but I'll answer for it you *don't* escape again."

The Reverend Simon's lower lip protruded ominously.

"Tell me," he said, "was that not your intention, Jim Macdonald?"

"I dinna ken," answered Jim, raising his blubbered freckled face for a moment.

"Ah! tears, I see," replied the Reverend Simon triumphantly. "Jim Macdonald is in a humble mood this morning. Tears! but they, let me tell you, my young friend, won't get you off. Tears! they are the refuge of the coward, but the coward must pay the penalty for his ill-deeds just as much as the brave man, Jim Macdonald. Don't you think so?"

"I dinna ken," answered Jim in the same helpless way as before.

"He must come back to the school with me," said the Reverend Simon turning to Jim's parents, "come back at once. I'm sure you both agree with me that he should be thoroughly well punished for the breaking of all the school rules, his wicked temper, which might have ended

in another boy's death, and his unparalleled insolence to Mr. Maitland and myself."

Euphemia, overawed as usual by the presence of the Reverend Simon, could only nod and make faces of assent through her streaming tears. Alexander had risen and looked very sulky.

"I'm glad you're sensible enough to agree with me," said the Reverend Simon, "I'm glad your fond mother's heart is not so partial as to wish Jim to avoid the chastisement that will be healthy both for his body and his soul. I'm glad, very glad, Mrs. Macdonald. Mrs. Findlater (Euphemia stiffened and began to sniff instead of sob) says, and you'll be pleased to hear it, I'm sure, that Johnny (Euphemia's air grew quite pugnacious) has had an excellent night's rest and is little the worse this morning for his accident."

"Huh!" replied Euphemia with an imperceptible snort, "excuse me, Meenister, your umbrella's drippin' on the flur. May I put it on the mat?" She took the offending article from the Reverend Simon's hand and deposited it by the door.

"Huh!" she muttered to herself, "sic a flummox for a wee bit scratch. It's naethin' but a lassie ava."

"And now, Alexander!" continued the Reverend Simon, taken somewhat aback by Euphemia's action (the quarryman stiffened in the same way his wife had done). "I need not fear that, where the gentle heart of Mrs. Macdonald has agreed to a painful necessity, the sterner and more practical heart of the father will —"

"Eh! Meenister," interrupted Alexander cautiously, but with a mighty red face, "I'm thinkin' the preecise manner in which oor Jim sud be punished is a matter which is requirin' a ver-r-ra careful deeleboration on the pairt of Mrs. Macdonald an' ma'sel."

Nothing could exceed the infinite slowness with which

Alexander drawled out the above sentence. The Reverend Simon heard him with anger growing more and more marked in his white face. His lower lip shot further and further out. Black furrows of a frown knotted themselves on his square white forehead.

"Tut — tut — tut, Alexander," he cried, when the quarryman had ended. "This is not what I expected — not what I expected at all — oh! no indeed. Jim must be punished by the proper authorities — the proper authorities — oh! yes — Mr. Maitland and myself — each in his proper sphere — not a doubt of it. You must bring yourself to realise that, my man. It's highly important you should realise that — highly important. Jim must come back with me at once. Mr. Maitland —"

Alexander looked sulkier than ever: his little whiskers quivered with animosity: his face was the picture of obstinacy.

"Mr. Maitland," he said in the same slow drawling voice, "Mr. Maitland's the Dominie, I'm thinkin', but the Dominie's no the faither of the bairn. I'm the faither, Meenister, and I'm gaein' to punish him in my ain way."

"Macdonald!" exclaimed the Reverend Simon, "do you mean —?"

"I mean what I say, Meenister," replied the quarryman inflexibly. "An' now, if you'll excuse me, Meenister, I maun gae to the Quarries. I'm ower late as it is."

The Minister glowered, holding his temper hard.

"Mrs. Macdonald?" he cried, knowing his influence over Euphemia, "cannot you persuade your husband? I assure you —"

To his surprise Euphemia looked as inflexible as Alexander.

"A'm thinkin' my man's the best judge," replied Euphemia, "its no a case where a wumman sud interfere."

"Do as you like," thundered the Minister, losing all control of himself, and the consequences be on your own head. Do not blame *me* if the boy goes to the bad, as I'm sure he will," he said viciously, turning on Jim, who was standing stupefied and helpless in a corner of the room. "But let me tell you one thing for certain, and I'm sure I speak for Mr. Maitland as well as for myself, the boy shall not enter the school, till he comes back with a written apology from you and an undertaking that he shall submit to the school discipline."

"I was no intendin' he sud r-r-etur-rn to the schule," replied Alexander in the same slow drawl.

Without another word the Reverend Simon turned his broad back, caught up his umbrella, left the house, and slammed the door.

"Oh! Alexander," said Euphemia in a timorous voice.

"Peace, wumman," replied her husband, "I'll hae no one patronisin' me, comin' into my hoose without a word, tellin' me what to do wi' my ain bairn, calling me Alexander."

"And," said Euphemia with a certain spirit, "I'm no wushin' that Mrs. Findlater an' — an' her precious Johnny sad be pit doon ma throat ony mair."

Thus did the vagaries of that singularly unphilosophical couple, his parents, save Jim from a further spell of slavery under the Dominie's rule.

"An' now, Jim, my man," said Alexander, "I'm gaein to gie ye the biggest weltin' ye've ever had. To-morrow ye shall come and work wi' me in the Quarries."

CHAPTER XXI

IT is a curious reflection that our lives seem to run in cycles. A period of comparative quiescence is succeeded by a burst of feverish activity, a period of resignation followed by a year or two of undreamt of joy or undreamt of sorrow. That conglomeration of activities, yclept "a man," has to reserve its energies, during these periods of quiescence, in order to extract all the essence of the approaching climax.

Nevertheless, though the outward appearance of "the man" may seem equable, and he may think to himself that he has at last attained the coveted calm attained by a few of the greater sages, somewhere in the depths new activities are stirring, waiting to clash with new experiences, stirring restlessly, ceaselessly, giving "the man" no peace, even though he may be almost unconscious of them.

At the beginning of Part II of my biography, I wrote how our friend the Giganticulus found a great calm in his manual labour on the hills, but I also told how often and often, as he sat on a boulder, his red head in his hands, he would stare far away over the great valley of Calder towards the Pass of Ballandarroch, where the narrow track ran like a thread through forests of firs, climbing between the snow-topped peaks of More and Moich, and at length vanishing into an unknown country. Those were his restless hours. Some hint of Fate must have warned him that on a day to come his feet would tread the lofty path and carry him into the unknown.

Yet, after his miserable lustrum at school, Jim, for at least a year following the incidents described in the preceding chapters, enjoyed that delightful feeling of calm.

All the enmities, hatreds, jealousies, and violence that had racked him, faded away into a shadowy past.

Fair-haired, blue-eyed Johnny Findlater was only part of a dream.

Black-haired, passionate Jessie McLure, part of a dream.

The long-nosed, sarcastic little Dominie, part of a dream.

That fateful blow, which tapped Maitland's claret, part of a dream.

The terrific welting received from Alexander and endured with something like philosophic fortitude, part of a dream.

In fact, it was only in *real* dreams that Jim lived the past vividly once more. By this we see that secret energies were stirring in him the whole time, which gained power only when his conscious personality no longer assumed direction.

To begin with, and during the first year at least, he seemed to have put the past entirely behind him, neither to regret it, nor hate it, nor wish to think on it, nor feel it, nor want to examine it. It appeared to have entirely escaped from him in that fierce outburst of passion, when the Red Mist came into his eyes for the first time.

Then, though he hardly noticed them, vague and uneasy feelings began to haunt him, an indefinable ache, the desire for something, which he could not express, though I do not suppose he ever tried. There was nothing tumultuous in these feelings, nothing to make him really unhappy, as he had been before, but with them came for the first time the dreams in which he lived the past so vividly again — the dreams in which he saw Jessie, with her black hair flying and her dark face aglow — in which he heard the cutting taunts of Johnny Findlater and writhed — in which his miserable hours in the ill-lit narrow schoolroom came back with almost all their old intensity — in which he once more hit the Dominie's long nose and felt it deliciously squash under his fist.

These dreams would, for an hour or two, leave him curiously moved, but the pure air of the mountains and the strenuous labour of the Quarries availed to banish his emotion and leave him healthily tired.

The foreman, a good-humoured fellow, and a friend to Alexander, was kind to our Giganticulus. So were the men with whom he worked and gradually, among the little company at the Quarries, Jim's reputation began to be rehabilitated. But then I doubt whether he had ever seemed *very black* to the easy-going, generally well-disposed, rough-and-ready quarrymen. After all Jim's were only school-boy crimes, and schoolmasters are schoolmasters, ministers ministers all the world over.

Jim's principal enemies had left Tuchan. First of all the Dominie went. His authority had been undermined by Jim's blow. His nose was indeed twisted forever and not even a double quantity of undiluted sarcasm could carry off the effect.

Then Mrs. Findlater, to the great delight of Euphemia, migrated to a big Scotch town, at a grammar-school in which her Johnny had gained a scholarship.

Last of all Farmer McLure left Calder's Farm. His wife, that woman with ideas on the importance of her family, urged him to move nearer a country town, where Jessie could get a better education.

Though these three, Jessie, Johnny, and Mrs. Maitland, had left Tuchan, there were not wanting those in the village who were unwilling to let Jim restore himself to popular favour. The principal fermenter of this agitation was, of course, the Reverend Simon McManus. He used his influence with the women of Tuchan to have Jim declared outlaw, told the little children to beware of him.

The art of drawing Jims, that form of pictorial torment invented by Johnny Findlater, had not been forgotten. Every blank wall in the village was covered with

them, and it has not been discovered that the Reverend Simon ever took any pains to have them washed out.

I even believe that Jim was used as a kind of bogey to scare naughty infants into obedience. It is certain that, if they saw him coming, the tots of the village would burst into yells unquenchable, till their mothers came out and took them into the house. Thus among the female and infant population of Tuchan, the Jim-myth revolved in a vicious circle, like a wounded snake, which moves round and round, biting its back and at every bite inflames the original source of pain. No one, after a short time, remembered whether Jim had actually maimed, mauled, threatened, frightened, or otherwise ill-treated a helpless child or whether it was only practically certain that he would, if he could. All women, however, agreed with singular unanimity that Jim was a dangerous character, living, even as Mrs. Findlater prophesied, "to be hangit," and all the little ones howled as he went by.

Two or three years turned them from infants to teachable children, and when they went to the school, where Mr. Maitland's successor reigned, they found the Jim-myth in its most lurid form. Heaven knows what singular tales of this red-headed desperado were whispered from child to child in the narrow grimy classroom!

It is the nature of human beings to accustom themselves to anything, and, although, as we have seen, this cruel treatment had for many years humiliated and hurt Jim beyond any words, after a time, strengthened as he was by the air and labour of the Quarries, he became completely resigned, no longer even noticed it, shot up longer and leaner every day. His overgrown body did not look so clumsy as in the days of his childhood, his freckled face was healthily tanned. The grey-brown eye was, however, rather melancholy and wistful in expression, and he was fond of gazing into distances, such as the great

Calder Valley, for instance, till the foreman would say to him good-naturedly:

“Eh! Jim lad, wauk up! Dreamin’ waunt mak’ a quarryman. Tak’ the baasket and off wi’ ye.”

Thus in Tuchan the Jim-myth grew from day to day among the children, women, and newcomers, and thus life in the Stone-Quarries, rude, rough, healthy, rather lonely, (he was a boy among men), quasi-comtemplative like all life in the mountains, and strengthening began, as far as the body went, to make a man of Jim. He put on inches as other people put on their hats.

CHAPTER XXII

ONLY *he* could not take them off again.

CHAPTER XXIII

I THINK I have mentioned further back that there always lurked in Jim's mind a wonderful idea that his growth was merely temporary, a premature shooting of the limbs to cease in due course and leave his coevals to creep up to his shoulder, his head next, and then (oh! exquisite thought), perhaps even finally overtop him.

This idea, nursed as a sorrowful and yet not entirely hopeless secret, continued to delude our Giganticulus.

Though he had become more or less resigned to a lonely existence, he could never persuade himself to do anything but hate his huge body and still longed with all the dormant force of his passionate nature to be ordinary — a boy of decent, average, unremarkable size. That vow to eat no more than boys of decent, average, unremarkable size was made indeed without any ulterior view as to its effect on growth, but, after keeping it religiously for a few days, he was struck with this lightning-flash of an idea. A meagre diet, meagre for him, might really curtail his shooting powers.

It was another delusion. Jim went hungry to no purpose, if we except Alexander's satisfaction and Euphemia's anxiety. She asked him:

"Hae ye nae stomach for your meat, laddie? Are ye no feelin' weel?"

Jim could not explain his motives. He knew from old experience that Euphemia would never understand. There the matter stood and after a bit the Macdonald family became accustomed to a less voracious Jim.

As for the lightning-flash that illumined Jim's mind

with hope, it died away as quickly almost as it came, leaving him in a deeper darkness of despair.

He continued to shoot up and up and up, like the bamboo in a damp tropical night, like the beanstalk planted by Jack of the fairy-tale ('twas a portent). He became bigger and broader and stronger every day; his hands and feet were especially enormous, the badge of his future gianthood, for, as everyone knows, they come to their full size long before the rest of the body reaches maturity. What hands!

What feet! ('twas indeed a portent!)

Alexander would now fall into the way of looking at that enormous palm and those enormous fingers, as if they aroused in him a strange and direful suspicion, which yet he could not quite put into words. He watched them sometimes at meals as Jim plied knife and fork, sometimes at the Quarries, as he fell into one of his fits of abstraction.

Alexander could not keep his eyes off those hands. One day Jim caught him looking, brow-knitted, face puzzled.

Jim's freckled cheeks became incarnadined. He felt as if he shared with his father a dreadful secret, some fate hovering over him imminent and yet indescribable.

From that day the comparative calm of the last three years began to desert him.

Our Giganticulus was now fifteen, a curious boy to see. On the top of him was still those tangled masses of red hair and then a small innocent face with roundish tanned cheeks and, as it were, a puzzled doubtful expression changing, in moments of abstraction, to one decidedly mournful. His neck was long and thick. His shoulders sloped rather, giving promise of great strength, and were from point to point of extraordinary breadth. Jim was still lanky and clumsy, a hobbledehoy from the soles of his enormous feet to the topmost lock of his red hair, and one did not realise the thickness of his back, thickness of his

arms and legs, thickness of his loins, thickness of his neck, till one compared him with, say, — oneself.

Then one stood gaping, if one knew his age. “Only fifteen! no more?” anyone — everyone cried.

(See Jim draw into himself! How he longs to be ordinary — just ordinary — not a thing for sight-seers.)

The eye of critical measurement ran once more from top to toe, heedless, in the brutality of egotistical astonishment, whether Jim winced or flushed, and endeavoured to take in the portent. It was undoubtedly something not seen before, rather ridiculous perhaps. (Jim would read this in the tell-tale eyes. Such are the sorrows of budding giants.) One would perhaps smile a little. The spectacle was fantastic, — verra strange — something to be remembered with other tales of curiosity and wonder over the cottage fire, when the brew went round and the pipes were lit, a cap to another’s yarn, as, for instance:

“Ance I was seein’ a dog twenty-three years auld, and, mon alive, I’m tellin’ the truth,” or “Ance I met a mon wha knew a mon wha said he’d seen a ghaist” or “a sea-sairpent” or “the king” or “London.” So an old weather-beaten fisherman could call out, “Ance I was fushin’ off Ruish, the simmer before last, an’ we pit into Tuchan, an’ mon alive I’m tellin’ ye the truth, I was seein’ a laddie fifteen years auld, walking in the street —” and then no doubt the tale, like other fisherman’s tales, *and* Jim would grow in the process of telling.

All this Jim could read in the eyes of the few, the very few strangers who saw him, for few strangers visited Tuchan, and so gradually came more and more to the conclusion that the greatest happiness for him would be to remain a quarryman, to work all day in the open air and then to return to sleep, sound except when the dreams haunted him. That would indeed be the greatest happiness, to live and die in Tuchan, not to go further abroad

where the tell-tale eyes and following glances of strangers would rack every tender susceptibility in his great body.

Let him even pretend to himself, a fiction which surely (oh! Jim) could harm no one, that he was a boy of just ordinary, average, decent, unremarkable size. It was easy to pretend this, very easy, till a strange eye saw him, and opened wide with astonishment, or till Alexander, looking at him in a kind of bewilderment, cried:

“Losh! what haunds!”

Then the agreeable fiction would take wings and leave Jim miserable till, by a gentle course of self-deception, he coaxed it back again. Thus wavered he between peace and unhappiness, being indeed on a balance, but oh! how vain is it to attempt an escape from truth. Jim might gloze, cozen, cheat, beguile himself, but, in spite of these fraudulent snatches at the *summum bonum*, he spurted still, grew unceasingly out of his jerseys and corduroys, overtopped at length all his companions at the Quarries, though he was only fifteen years old.

He was not yet a *gigas*, in good truth, only a *giganticulus*, but he was growing, growing, growing, as if he would never stop, and knew it. Deep down in his heart he knew it, but, still cowardly, wished to blind himself to the fact, if possible. He had the body of a *gigas*, but not yet the mind of a *gigas*, not yet the mind of even a *giganticulus*. He had no mind and no courage to speak of.

Some day, perhaps, he will have a heart as big as his hands and feet.

And what huge, huge hands and feet they were.

Losh!

CHAPTER XXIV

JIM, then, bore the appearance of a youth moderately content and Alexander, what with one thing and another, began to forget the grudge he had felt against him ever since his birth, aye, and before it.

He was puzzled, astonished, sometimes even worried by the portentous size of his youngest son, but it cannot be said a thing so personal to Jim himself, as this abnormal growth, caused the quarryman any very serious qualms for the present. Even *he* did not realise that Jim would, in a very few years, become a full-blown giant, but even had he done so, he could never have been capable of entering into the sensations of a human being set apart from his fellow-mortals by such a mysterious dispensation. Only giants can sympathise with giants. I have already given Jim all the sympathy at my command, but how can a mere pigmy of some five feet nine inches put himself into the shoes of a colossal? I *have* a pair of James Macdonald's shoes, as a matter of fact, which the amiable fellow presented to me on his departure to the Court of Tokio (what a sensation he will cause amongst our tiny allies!) and I often, for the fun of the thing, try standing in them.

You cannot conceive what an eerie feeling the situation produces. In my own pair of highlows, patched and indifferently polished though they may be (literary work is very indifferently remunerated), I have at any rate the comfortable sensation of being well planted on my own basis, of being capable of steering my own course whether in town or country, of finding these somewhat ancient

fabrics a decidedly serviceable appendage to the foot. Directly, however, I step into James' shoes, my legs, and consequently myself, seem at the entire mercy of queer ungovernable forces. If I try to walk, I stagger and reel. It is all very well in my modest parlour, where nothing can molest me. There, of course, I am safe. If, however, I were to try a walk abroad in James' shoes, heaven knows what would become of me! All those passengers and vehicles thro' which I tread my way so neatly and briskly, when I have "my own" on, would become intensely, horrifyingly formidable obstacles. I should get shouted at, cursed, jostled, punched, bewildered, frightened, and finally, in all probability, knocked down and killed. That is to say, if I attempted to take the main routes. Or suppose, for the sake of argument, I foresaw these dangers and elected to go by an unfrequented way, where the travellers were few and the traffic practically non-existent, ten to one that these accursed, eccentric, immeasurable shoes of the Scotch Giant would lead me utterly astray. There would be no one on those unfrequented roads to point out my path to me and I should be lost forevermore.

Oh! no, decidedly, one cannot wear a giant's shoes.

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To return however to Alexander and Jim! They were at that time on fairly friendly though not intimate terms. Alexander did not perhaps feel this lack of intimacy. It was very different in the case of Euphemia. Jim was her youngest and her biggest son.

Through all the mutations of his life he had remained her favourite, even though the little girl Effie had, at a critical moment, if you remember, unavoidably taken the larger part of her attention.

Yet the birth of the little girl had made a rift between mother and son, the interference of the Reverend Simon widened the rift, and the peculiar circumstances of our

big fellow's boyhood broadened it into something like a chasm.

Euphemia looked sorrowfully across this chasm. How she longed to be able to convey herself over it and take Jim to her breast! Many a time she tried the crossing, only to be baffled. He was almost a man now and she thought that sometime or other she could be useful to him.

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Yet there on the other side stood Jim, lonely and sometimes moody. The mother's eye saw that much. They could not even touch hands across the chasm. It was too far. Jim, in some intuitive fashion, felt that it was too far, though he did not know in those days that he must always be alone, "alone without anie companie."

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Poor feeble, querulous Euphemia! She always hoped to be Jim's mother, his mother in earnest, in the truest sense of the word, yet, by the very nature of things, she never could be.

Euphemias cannot stand in the shoes of giants any more than the humble writer of this biography. Euphemias cannot understand the isolation of the colossus, the loneliness of a different world. Euphemias must keep clean the hearth, mended the socks, bright the porringer and platter, shining the window, dustless the chair and table.

Tedious and tiresome duties enough, i'fegs, but duties under the nose, the fingers, and the eye! These, the ties of family, and the bruises that come to all in life, with some small aspirations perhaps, make up the existence of Euphemias. But no more than the Alexanders can they comprehend the lonely outlook of the giant, standing a yard above his fellow-creatures, gazing down upon them with luminous eye, and conscious of a superhuman strength,

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to which none other can pretend. How can he not despise the queer pigmies he sees bustling round him, anyone of whom he could pick up and toss into a basket behind him, as tall Agrippa did to the bad little boys and girls? How remain benignant under such peculiar circumstances, especially if he has been thro' all that our worthy red-headed James went through? Why (oh! tell me why) does he not rush madly through them, battering their heads together, spilling them sideways, trampling on them, disabusing them of the idea of their importance, revenging himself for all the insults received at their hands, before he came to a giant's strength?

'Tis wonderful to have a giant's strength.

'Tis horrible to use it as a giant.

In the great tender, pulsing heart of the giant is a marvellous pity. He does not spare himself but only others.

And yet, you may say, Jim felt no pity for Euphemia, if he did not try to cross the chasm which lay between them. Oh! he did! Often he became sorrowful, as he looked back across it, and thought of the might-have-been, thought how they could have been mother and son, if he had only been an ordinary boy, for on occasions like these, in these deep-hearted searchings, his agreeable fiction would not serve.

Alas! not even a Giant can contend with the Mighty Must (as Sir W. S. Gilbert calls it).

The subter-conscious Jim was already aware that no ordinary doom awaited him.

Sometimes in dreams and even in his waking dreams he recalled the Homeric battle between Euphemia and Mrs. Findlater.

Was he grateful to Euphemia for rescuing him from shrill fury and a toasting-fork?

It seemed to him that Euphemia's conduct had been wrong. Undoubtedly she meant well, if such a term could be applied to an action of impulse, but where he himself had submitted with resignation, it was no part of anyone, not even his mother, to interfere.

From the hills Jim had seen how petty and ignoble all his sufferings seemed; he had known the lonely majesty of winds, hills, and skies, and recanted.

Then did Euphemia, roused by passion, rush like a fury into the fray.

The lonely heart of the Giganticulus knew she was wrong and pitied her, loved her for it, yes, but could say not one word with reference to that evening. He remained as aloof as before, and so no wonder poor Euphemia felt wounded.

In spite of the hysteria of joy with which she had welcomed Jim home that night, when she thought him lost and knew he was found, in spite of her determination that henceforward, after any punishment he might have to undergo, Jim should be her "dearest big bairn," in spite of the fact that for a time she believed him to have been unjustly treated, a doubt began once more to creep into Euphemia's mind, a doubt engendered by slighted affection based on no overt act.

"Was Jim really a guid son to her?"

War had been declared between them, but a truce lately patched, and more than once she dwelt upon the opinion held of him by

CHAPTER XXV

THE Reverend Simon McManus.

As we know, this gentleman had never forgiven Jim. We had our word about the Euphemias and Alexanders, now comprehend the trouble that comes on such worthy, look-under-the-nose folk when a rare creature such as a giant happens to be born unto them. If they do not dislike him, they are irritated by him; if they cannot cramp his big frame in the half-worn-out, third-hand fragments of clothing bequeathed by family custom, they fret, weep, growl, and rage as elbows and knees burst unconfined through threadbare body-coverings, which they thrust upon him. He is all wanton, uncontrollable, boisterous energy and misdirection. They put him half-naked, but as yet unashamed, in a ridiculous sack petticoat. The worthy creatures can do no more. All proper clothing he has long ago scraped, torn, excoriated into bits. No help for it then!

Let him run, roll, wallow in the sack-petticoat. They have done all that he can demand by family right.

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Then, in guise of the Reverend Simon McManus, see the upright, unbending form of Public Convention approach with out-shot lower lip and white forehead, furrowed in dark wrinkles of annoyance.

"You must conform!" says he. "We cannot have under our noses an object such as you, imperfectly clothed, a menace to propriety already, dirty, semi-naked, and red-haired. This village is my province. Behold in me, in my square upraised hand, in my out-shot lip which poises ere

delivering its well-pondered definite judgments, in my correct costume, the highly respectable and unexceptionable insignia of my office, a custodian, approbated and admired, of the public and health, happiness, morals.

"You must conform, my young friend! In the first place it is only I and not you yourself, who know what is good for you. In the second, if you do not dress and behave like other good little girls and boys, you will undoubtedly be thrashed, because you interfere with the generous and high-minded scheme which I represent, and which has, after long consideration and trial, been found to be wholly and exclusively the best. Other people find it satisfactory and so you must.

"We cannot allow one urchin to interfere either with our scheme or our peace of mind.

"If you have an exceptionally loud voice, modulate it! Our scheme does not tolerate bawling in the public street.

"If you cannot help tearing your clothes and impoverishing your family (a private matter) when you play, you *must not* play, because the decency of your attire is thereby endangered (a public matter). Our scheme does not tolerate impropriety of any kind.

"If you are, in short, exceptional in any way, you must learn to reach our great ideal, uniformity.

"If you cannot learn it by yourself, your parents, by stripe and precept, must teach you. If *they* cannot teach you, *I* must teach you.

"You must go to school.

"Be surrounded there by a crowd of our good little boys and girls, whose minds of blameless regularity need no such correction as yours does.

"Be presided over by my admired colleague, Mr. Maitland, whose experience and judgment are unrivalled.

"He will knock a deal of this nonsense out of you. The boys and girls will knock more.

“At last, after a period of tribulation, you will be planed, clipped, sawed, hacked, and finally dovetailed into our scheme.

“Our workshop is the best, our mechanics are the most skilful.

“Come here, my young friend, and let me measure the girth of your trunk! Heavens, what untidy, ragged little branches! We must lop *those* off.

“Then, when we turn you out nicely polished with a lovely row of shiny brass handles, and a tier of spick-and-span, dustless, empty drawers, when, in short, you are a cabinet, like a thousand other cabinets, turned out from our workshop, of perfect shape, execution, and finish, you will be *unutterably* grateful —

“*Inexpressibly thankful*, when you remember that, instead of a beautiful, shapely cabinet, you might have been a rough, horrid, uncouth tree, all twisted by the winds of heaven, covered with moss, lichen, and bark, and fit only for the untidy habitations of the fowls of the air.”

We see, from this half-comic dithyramb, that the Reverend Simon had discerned from earliest times a rebel in Jim Macdonald.

This hostility was partly a matter of prejudice, partly a matter of temperament, partly a matter of social convictions.

He had never liked Alexander and he never liked Jim.

There was nothing in that big fellow's life-development to make him change his opinion.

Since the fateful day of the boy's revenge on all his oppressors, the Minister was his avowed, sworn, and unconcealed enemy. We have seen how he burrowed under Jim's reputation, when he had to deal with women and children. Insidious tactics suited him best in those quarters. With the quarrymen, fishermen, and other males of

Tuchan he was more open, if he could gain an ear. In fact the Giganticulus, since he escaped from punishment that fateful day, became a perfect obsession with him, and the remarkable thing is that the Reverend Simon, a narrow-minded and obstinate character, believed himself to be, without question, absolutely in the right.

Jim's behaviour was, however, so unexceptionable from the day he went to the Quarries, that it was impossible for the Reverend Simon to find any stick to beat him with. So, as is often the way in such cases, he began to look for a cause of offence, and to prepare himself for the belief that the cause, when found, was none of *his own* seeking.

Now, although the Macdonald family and the Reverend Simon had quarrelled on the occasion of Alexander's refusal to send Jim back to the school, the Macdonalds, of course, still continued to attend the kirk. In the first place there was no other kirk to which they could go, and in the second their private relations could not be allowed to interfere with their attitude towards religious worship.

The Reverend Simon might at first frown, when he saw the little group of defiants filing into their seat, but, although he might wish them away, feel them a hidden core of antagonism, he was obliged to view the matter in the same light as they did.

So for two or three years the Macdonalds and the Minister continued in a state of ill-disguised hostility, in which, however, neither side made a definite move. The Reverend Simon knew that it would impair his own authority, if it were guessed that any of his parishioners had defied him, while Alexander, as long as the Minister did not "patronise" him, felt his independence sufficiently justified, and was content to accept him as his advisor in spiritual matters, a curious attitude of mind but one much humoured by the Alexanders. As for Euphemia, at heart she retained her ancient respect for the Reverend Simon,

which jealousy of Mrs. Findlater had only temporarily ruffled.

All these three years the Reverend Simon never lost his desire to, in a vulgar phrase, "get back" on Jim, whom he sincerely believed to be a wolf in the sheepfold, a blackguard lying low, a rebel who wore the King's Coat for his own base and private ends.

All these three years he watched, Sabbath after Sabbath, Jim shamle in with the rest of his family; Jim grown bigger and bigger every week-end it seemed; and yet still guiltless of any cause of offence. Then suddenly, mysteriously, a little shoot of an idea began to spring in the sterile thin soil of his mind, and he knew, at once, what to do.

CHAPTER XXVI

FIRST of all, by an ingenious self-deception, he discovered that it was right for him to make friends with the Macdonalds. Such a long-standing feud did not befit either his dignity or his pastoral position, thought the Reverend Simon. Euphemia was the first approached. Long time had that worthy woman begun to pine for solemn influence and direction, delivered with shooting lip and square up-raised hand. Timorous though of having too much offended, she did not dare to make the first approaches. So when the Minister, after three years of distant salutation, raised his hat with courtly clerical grace and made friendly inquiries, that worthy little woman's heart beat fast and she flung herself, a penitent undisguised, back to his jurisdiction.

Easy was the conquest of Euphemia, who had been cast off, rather than a rebel. The conquest of Alexander the Reverend Simon knew to be a matter of delicate negotiation. Self-deceived as to his aim, he flattered, mistered, administered the puff insidious, humbling himself till the quarryman's vanity preened itself unconcealed.

"I'm thinkin' the Meenister has guessed I'm no a mon to be patronised," he said to Euphemia. "He can be agreeable company when he wushes."

"Alexander, did I no always tell ye that ye misjudged our guid Meenister," replied Euphemia. "To think after our rudeness to him that he is willin' to be sae polite. He is indeed a guid mon."

"I've kenned waur," replied Alexander, smiling with the vanity of one who has conquered in a long and arduous

struggle. "If he had realised suner that I wudna be patronised, we micht ha' been friends lang syne."

Euphemia's mild and feeble existence was irradiated by this compromise between her husband's independence and the Minister's swamping benevolence. She would have included Jim in the general amnesty, brought him to benevolence with a halter round his neck.

"The guid mon's ower anxious to hae ye apologise, Jim, an' he wull be forgivin' ye."

That insinuation had been subtly distilled into her mind with upraised hand and eye. All blame for the quarrel had been deftly cast on the Macdonald boy and himself represented as all too eager to condone — if Jim would put on the halter and kneel with bare knees.

Our Giganticulus was not naturally a good hand at forgiving and the Reverend Simon, who, self-deceived, never wished for the apology in reality, managed in various dexterous little ways such as stopping to examine the "Jims" still lingering on the white-washed walls of Tuchan, when the sensitive red-haired hobbledehoy went by, to inflame the resentment buried in that over-proud heart.

Euphemia might hint and even implore. Alexander might issue something in the nature of a paternal edict. Jim refused with inexplicable obstinacy. *Inexplicable*, because the Reverend Simon had played his cards too well, cheated with such subtlety that he did not know himself to have cheated.

History is full of such unconscious humbugs and much woe do they work before they go to their place.

The way of the Reverend Simon was now clear: the situation of our Giganticulus once more highly perilous, accused of unfilial chilliness and unchristian malignity at home, and veritably regarded by the Minister as menacing law and order, an anarchist upon whom to trample, while there was yet time.

And now the moment had arrived with Jim's last defence, his parent's goodwill, breached. With *them* once more on his side, the Reverend Simon could move and he moved swiftly, inflamed by a wrath which had smouldered for years, by an absolute conviction of his narrow sterile mind that he was acting justly, and a knowledge that everyone was on his side. Even Dr. Spens, almost won back by our big fellow's peaceable behaviour, seemed to join the enemies, when he heard of contumacy towards the Minister and Euphemia's complaints.

Once more the Reverend Simon was master of Tuchan. Only he, perhaps, knew how nearly his supremacy had been endangered by one long, lank hobbledehoy, shooting fast.

For Jim still shot up, up, and up, and, as ever, it was this strange elongation of body that brought him trouble, giving the Reverend Simon a vantage point from which he could attack. Now we all know that a church, by some curious paradox, is a place in which laughter explodes and runs Kentish-fire on a very slight provocation. Any trifle will serve, and then how this uncontrollable *fourire* shakes, throttles, and turns to gasping and spluttering all the easily-unbalanced!

The Jim, about whom atrocious fable ran riot from earliest to school times, might frighten bairns, as he lumbered home from the Quarries through terror-haunted dusk, when eerie and unchancy things begin to walk abroad, but Jim, shambling into kirk with his family in the broad light of day, was indeed nothing but a figure of fun. No one could deny that the entry of the Macdonald family had something essentially comic about it. First came Euphemia, working-duds forgotten and dressed, parroquet-wise, in the finery of Glasgow, year before last, in hat all ribands and feathers dyed with vicious crudity, gown cut awry of monstrous purple hue, and boots propped on inch-high heels. With pinched lip and eye serenely

vacant, yet really circumspect, entered Euphemia. Not more ridiculous than the other women present, she passed to the accompaniment of tail-eyed glances, sniffs, and lifted chins. Effic, Jim's little sister, followed, a pert enough minx with a short tartan skirt, long stockings, pig-tail, and air of indescribable sanctity, marred every other second by an equally indescribable air of precocious ingenuity, as her eyes met those of small friends.

Came next Alexander. Stiff, square, prim, eyes front marched he, with right-angled feet, and long upper lip. He had much dignity to support and was dressed entirely in black.

Then, for the rest of the family were out in the world, a yard or two behind and showing a hang-dog countenance, all self-conscious misery, shambled in our unfortunate Giganticulus. His huge shoulders were bowed, his red head sunk, his knees crooked. His feet dragged and shuffled as he slunk after his family up the aisle.

Gone the agony wrought by the Jim-drawings! Gone the woe brought by derisive cries! But hateful and ever more hateful each successive Sabbath was this entry into the kirk before the staring mocking eyes of all Tuchan.

Jim was a godsend to the House of God.

All the children looked to him as their refuge from monotony. Let the service drone wearily to its close, the Reverend Simon unloose all the windbags of platitude and disgorge all the froth of superficial precept, never stirring the gloomy depths or touching the azure, those feet-rapping, finger-chewing, nudging, saucer-eyed or pig-eyed youngsters have something as good as a play — Jim. Nor are their elders a whit less inattentive to our amiable monster from the time he enters the kirk, shuffling and shambling, till the time the Reverend McManus has droned his last.

Sabbath after Sabbath, he felt a hundred eyes, gimlet-

like, behind him, knew fifty mouths agape in grins, heard whispers, titters, sniggles, and spluttered half-suppressed laughter. The "behind-him" was full of mocking noises, and perhaps he fancied even more than there were. From time to time one of the younger members of the community would turn round, stare undisguisedly, ravished at the spectacle of Jim standing tall as a lighthouse beside his mother, wink at Effie, and cram handkerchief into mouth, gasping his mirth, till plucked back by angered relatives, who yet did not forego a glance of extreme amusement at our Redhead.

He, if you remember, had a delight, in his younger days, in shouting and bawling, not a rare thing among youngsters. Nor is it a rare thing to find them liking a song or hymn, joining in with shrill, perhaps unmelodious voices, but very much enjoying this opening of their throats to measured time and all the pleasures of noise, let us not say "harmony." At any rate our Giganticulus was not singular in *this* respect. He had scarcely an ear in the musical sense, but mightily enjoyed letting go his great bawling voice on a hilltop, finding a certain solace for his ills in that huge sound. As yet he had never, through shyness, tried singing in the kirk, but this Sunday thought he would begin. So, when the psalms began to be chanted out by Euphemia, Alexander, Effie, and the whole congregation, and the clerk beat time and the Reverend Simon boomed a lead in his frog-in-the-throat voice, with the sound of a bull's bellow, out-bellowing all, suddenly he let forth.

"The moon by night thee shall not smite
Nor yet the sun by day."

It was a mistake. Jim had not meant to sing (?) so loud, not knowing the pitch of his own voice indoors or in the echoing space of a kirk.

Blushed our Giganticulus, grew red as beetroot, hot all over, weak in the knees and almost collapsed, when he heard himself make that overpowering bellow. Surprised he may have been himself, but "astounded," only faintly reflects the feelings of every other.

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For a bar and a half's rest the music and the singing stopped completely. For the space of three minutes the Reverend Simon looked Erebus. For the space of fifty seconds every one in front of Jim turned round and stared. For five minutes Alexander glowered at him, as if he was demented, and for ten Effie was in uncontrollable giggles, which Euphemia, after dropping her book and shrieking faintly at Jim's impossible blunder, endeavoured to suppress by shaking and cuffing. All chance of singing the psalms in a decent, sober, pious and orderly spirit had vanished.

The kirk was filled with tittering, whispering, giggling, and hushing.

CHAPTER XXVII

AT first the Reverend Simon, as we have said, looked Erebus, and his looks only faintly reflected his feelings. Then, in spite of his wish to deceive himself, he realised that Jim's absurd blunder was the very thing needed for the success of his plan.

But to explain this, we must go back a little and examine the Reverend Simon's mind, not as he imagined it to be, but as it actually was.

It may well be imagined that the Minister had not failed to notice the commotion caused by Jim's entry into the kirk and the outbursts of merriment to which his presence gave rise. These disturbances had continued for two or three years in a more or less marked manner and grew worse in proportion to the unchecked shooting-up of the Giganticulus. Now this was an additional cause of offence to the Reverend Simon. Not only was his service interrupted, but his own authority was considerably lessened by the inattention of the congregation. It seemed that only a little more relaxation, from whatever cause, was necessary wholly to subvert his supremacy. The train was laid. A chance spark might ignite it and blow his headship sky-high, even as the Dominie, in days gone by, had been levelled, all unexpectedly, to the ground.

Jim had expelled the Dominie and, though through no effort of his own, he might expel the Minister. The Reverend Simon both feared and hated him, him the wolf, the rebel, the anarchist.

Every year, every Sabbath, every day, his resolve to banish Jim from Tuchan, by hook or by crook, grew stronger.

We remember how he poisoned all feminine ears against Jim. He could work by insinuation there, but masculine ears, as of easy-going quarrymen, hearty fishermen, would need some overt display of insolence and wickedness, with which to prove the necessity for a bold attack.

Long time he wondered whence he could strike the blow.

Then the idea flashed upon him.

With his parents alienated, the wretch was at his mercy, and could be effectively accused of wanton buffoonery in the sacred building, of deliberately exposing his uncouth and ridiculous person to the merriment of children, of thereby creating unparalleled disorder, whisperings, titterings, and distraction throughout, of behaving in such a way out of sheer malignity in order to cause the greatest amount of annoyance and inconvenience to the Minister, whose offers of friendship, it was well known, had been most rudely repulsed. Would not then everyone be on his side and no one on Jim's, whose appearance, it could not be denied, was the sign for continuous and most unseemly disturbances. What was, therefore, the penalty which the Rev. Simon's brain devised? None other than to cast out the wicked and insolent young rascal from his kirk. Oh! most dreadful penalty. Jim might go where he pleased, do what he pleased, but he would be an outcast, and no one could have a good word to say for him, wolf, rebel, and anarchist, who had flattened the Dominie, terrified and threatened small bairns for years, hypocritically conciliated the quarrymen, repaid Euphemia's affection with chill ingratitude, and wound up by wantonly disturbing the sacred hours of prayer.

An outcast would he be indeed, and outcasts have a way of falling into despair. Surely Jim Macdonald would be driven from their borders and might go when and where he pleased.

Such was the idea which grew in the thin, sterile soil of the Minister's mind and, hardly suffering Jim any longer, he determined to carry it out as soon as possible. That Sunday was the one chosen, for he had been bound to let some time elapse between his reconciliation with the Macdonalds and the final attack on Jim. The determination did not weigh heavily on his conscience; for his narrow sterile mind was convinced that it was doing the right thing, that Jim must be driven away, or he, the all-important to Tuchan, fall even as his friend the Dominie.

The disturbance caused by the entry of the Giganticulus had that morning been even greater than usual, the titterings, hushings, and starings continuous. The Reverend Simon felt wound up to say anything. Then, quite without warning, came that cataclysmal bellow in Jim's bull-voice, overpowering every other voice in the church, making every movable thing quiver, rattling every window, and, for a minute or two, stopping the service.

Astounded, furious, and incapable of thought, the Reverend Simon gazed at the pernicious one, who blushed all over, hung his head, bowed his shoulders. "Another instance of vile hypocrisy (thought the Minister), another outrage on the part of that Macdonald lump!" Then it came to him that this last part was even what he might have desired, have asked for. That ludicrous, untuneful bellow had put his enemy utterly in his power.

Still, fury turned his face whiter than ordinary: the black furrows gathered on his square white forehead: the square white hand trembled. The titterers, gigglers, and hushers grew silent as they watched these manifestations of wrath gathering on the Reverend Simon's countenance. They felt that something strange was in the air. All were a-quiver with expectation.

The Reverend Simon arose to preach his sermon.

It was terrific. The Minister himself had no mean lung

power and his voice was of the frog-in-the-throat order. When once he warmed to his work, it boomed *fff*. The *adagio*, however, was husky in tone and charged with pathos. For twenty-one years he had been in the parish of Tuchan; had come there as a young man, aglow with the sacredness of his cause and filled with, he hoped, the not unpardonable ambition of wishing to accomplish a great work, a noble work. Duty, however, he had always put before him as his most sacred ideal; the duty towards himself and the duty towards his neighbours, might he say, flock? Everyone of this flock, every man, woman, and child in Tuchan, was as one of his own family. He sympathised with their sorrows, rejoiced in their joys. Under his eyes had many of them grown from childhood to maturity, but they were still to him as his children, his children to whom he hoped, unworthy though he might be, to point the way. Yes, under his eyes and under his direction had the village grown up, and he could say, on looking back, that his children had been good children, children whom he trusted and (a break in his voice) loved (*crescendo*). Twenty-one years had passed since he first came to Tuchan, and he could truthfully say, on looking back, that there had been no serious dispute between him and his parishioners, his dearly loved children in Tuchan. Twenty-one years had passed, and he had grown from a young to a middle-aged man, but his feelings had never altered. Tuchan was to him a sacred spot (and so-on and so-on). It was a gratifying thing to him that he was tortured by no doubts. The high ideal, set before him in his youth, had been always in front of him to lead him (etc., etc.). He was convinced that he had always been animated by the best motives (and so forth). He believed that the majority of his children thought so too. It was a great comfort to him, this lasting, steadfast conviction. If he had ever felt any doubts that his judgment might be at

fault, he might have hesitated before taking the step which he was going to take now. If he had ever suspected any distrust on the part of his parishioners, he might have been in a difficulty in asking them to support him in a course of action seemingly incompatible with the doctrines of mercy and forgiveness inculcated by the blessed gospels. But he hoped he knew his duty, when it was set before him, however unpleasant it might be. There were cases in which it was simple weakness to forgive. Perhaps in a little village, so remote from the world as Tuchan, such cases might not have come under the notice of his flock. He was pleased himself, that so few travelled abroad and that his children were saved from the corrupting influences of the wicked thoughts and wicked deeds of great cities. Children were better at home (etc., etc.). He, their Minister, came to them from a great city and knew where evil stalked abroad, roaring for its prey. He knew the signs of evil and none hated it more than he . . . (*ff*). Did they wish to forgive evil, forgive murderers, thieves, liars, and adulterers? The Law punished them and sent them to their own place. Could they set themselves above the law? Wicked influences were abroad in great cities. It was neither his place nor his duty to analyse such subtle poisons, a drop of which might creep through the ear and infect the whole brain. It was not his province to examine the responsibility of such wretched creatures. His mind revolted from the thought. Each of his children had in it their power to choose between good and evil (etc., etc.). Let the Law take its course and the unhappy wretches who broke it be judged once and for all by a Higher Power (etc., etc.). It was his duty, the duty of all of them, whatever the tie, whatever the kinship, to stamp evil under their heel (*fff*) *when they saw it in their midst*. Twenty-one years had passed since he first came to Tuchan and he, their Minister, had never had to speak, either from the pulpit

or in private, as he had had to to-day. It would be a sad day in his memory (and so forth), many a sleepless night did he have in arriving at his duty (enlarge), but he determined at last to speak out. He had discovered signs of evil in their midst. Yes, he their Minister, with a larger experience than that of his little flock, had detected signs of evil, unmistakable signs, signs of depravity and rebellion, signs of hypocrisy and ill-concealed ferocity, signs of callous wickedness, and insolence to the most sacred things. There was amongst them one whose progress he had watched from a child, a faithless and perverse member of their generation (*fff* and black furrows on the forehead!). He did not wish to name any names in the sacred edifice, he respected the parents of the miserable and misguided boy, felt the utmost sympathy for them in their calamity in having such a son, but he felt it his duty to expel from the doors of the House of God one who, by his absurd buffoonery, wanton disregard of decency, monstrous impropriety, imperilled the very sanctity of the service which they had just been holding. This callous and irreverent behaviour was not a mere temporary lapse. It had extended over a long space of time, two or three years at least, and he could suffer it no more. Any further clemency would degenerate into weakness. Besides the worst reports were current in the village about this boy's conduct, reports which he was sure everyone had heard. From a small boy his reputation had been of the worst. He had always been on the side of disorder and rebellion, had more than once defied and insulted even their Minister, instead of submitting to just punishment for absolutely unheard of misdemeanours. Once again let him assure them further clemency would be weakness."

The Reverend Simon finished his sermon and left the pulpit.

The little congregation filed out of the kirk with grave

faces. The solemn boom of the Reverend Simon had started a new train of thought in their minds. After all, thought quarrymen and fishermen, Divine Service is a serious thing. Children must be brought up in the way they should go; they must take serious things seriously, not titter, whisper, and giggle. After all, thought the women, Jim Macdonald is a "bad ane." He has never been anything else. That bellow of his was an unpardonable thing, turned all the sacred ceremony into ridicule. "That guid mon the Meenister has been unco' forbearin'! Did ye no hear that he was offerin' to forgive Jim Macdonald and the lad wad hae naethin' to say to him?" Wives influence husbands in these matters and during the last month the opinion of the quarrymen had veered round against Jim.

The little congregation waited in a circle round the kirk door, waiting for the Macdonald family, expecting they knew not what.

First came Euphemia, pale and weeping copiously, face pitiable under the crude finery of the hat. Next Alexander, upper lip longer than ever and whiskers bristling. Then Effie, her pert peaky face looking rather frightened, and last of all, a good ten paces behind, the luckless Jim, Tuchan's scape-goat.

The congregation had behaved abominably and institutions been imperilled. Jim must be offered up.

A miserable spectacle did the wretch look, bewildered, angry, frightened, lonely, dishevelled, just, indeed, what a scape-goat ought to look. Had he seemed even a wee bit stronger or more independent, public opinion might have protected him; his family not have cast him off. But, there is no one to help those who do not help themselves. Self-assertion, my dear Jim, is a great asset in this pushing, vulgar world. Now indeed he was in one of his worst moments, helpless and hopeless. Everything

had come upon him suddenly. Alexander glowered in speechless indignation, when he tried to explain. Feeble, querulous Euphemia did nothing but weep. All round him, he saw the stern hostile faces of Tuchan. There was no sympathy for him in any of them. His huge size did but increase his appearance of imbecile ineffectuality. Great hands dangled down with limp fingers. Jaw slacked. Eyes were vacant and lustreless.

Furious, Alexander led the way home. Once more he had been deceived. Weeping followed Euphemia. Frightened went Effie, trotting at her mother's side. The Macdonald family were in disgrace and all through that miserable boy. Jim was left alone.

On him comes the Reverend Simon and finds him helpless in the circle of hard, condemning countenances.

"Away with you," he cries. "Never come inside the kirk door till you have learnt to behave with decency and respect. Away with you! Kirk is no place for a black-guard lad like you. All your misdeeds have found you out at last, Jim Macdonald. Look round here! Is there a single face which shows a thought that you have been unjustly treated? Away with you!"

With a sob, our Giganticulus turned on his heel and went shambling off.

"And now," boomed the Reverend Simon, "let this be a lesson to you boys. The way of the good man is hard, but not so hard as the way of the transgressor."

The Reverend Simon had judged his opportunity aright, and that discourse from the pulpit had made precisely evident what had been before but a dim adumbration of an idea hovering in the minds of the male population of Tuchan. In the kirk, in that solemn assemblage every Sabbath, in the black garments of ceremony worn, every one of them beheld the sum of Scotch respectability. They paid honour to the Reverend Simon, observed his

judgments, because he was the pinnacle to which all this edifice of respectability converged. Respectability was the little deity to whom they all bowed in its secret shrine, to whom they penetrated reverently. Mr. McManus insulted when (and Jim had been but a bairn then) usurping the authority of the Dominie was one thing, but Mr. McManus insulted in his own kirk, in his capacity of Minister, another and very different thing. All this respectability, which they worshipped, had, as its symbol, the Reverend Simon. Each quarryman felt the insult as if it had been offered to himself, as if his own little secret deity had been wantonly overthrown and triumphantly bellowed over. This is the kind of injury that a nation, which loves respectability above all other things, never forgives. Jim Macdonald had gone too far.

Tuchan cast him out.

In the last four or five months Jim had become such a size that the very sight of him, apart from the catalogue of misdemeanours to his name, began to raise suspicion. His secret troubles made him mournful. Hence accusations of a sullen, oblique, fierce nature. His huge hands and unnatural strength woke wonder everywhere, as to what might happen if he really turned rogue. It was like having an elephant about the place, on whose moral character the most grievous aspersions had been cast.

PART III

CHAPTER XXVIII

THIS casting out of Jim Macdonald from the kirk happened a month before the New Year, his seventeenth birthday.

Open war was now declared between him and the village.

The Reverend Simon had won the day and Jim was declared outlaw.

Outlaw! What a terrible sound that word has! terrible even to a lonely and ferocious creature, who has cut himself off from mankind by some hideous or barbarous act. How much more terrible to a shrinking hobbledehoy longing for human pity and sympathy: wanting something that he cannot find: not realising, in spite of the Reverend Simon's assertion, that every misfortune that had happened to him was his own fault!

Outlaw!! With not a friendly champion in the village: not an eye to light kindly on him: not a hand to rest amiably on his shoulder if it could be reached at all by any ordinary hand. Outlaw!!! With Alexander treating him with bare tolerance as having brought the Macdonald name into disgrace, and Euphemia, that little look-under-the-nose body, incapable of entering into any of his sensations, and therefore accusing him of utterly unfilial callosity and frigidity. Outlaw!!! It may have penetrated the minds of my readers that Jim Macdonald had so far done hardly anything that was, in the highest degree, blameworthy. There is no adage so true as the old one that says that one man may steal a horse, while another may not even look over a hedge. Jim's size in that little community of ordinary, decent, sober, averagely developed persons had been his handicap all along.

Beneath that broad chest indeed beat a heart of ridiculous tenderness, so soft that it made him the butt of jeering school-fellows, a prey to wandering dreams, which the ordinary boy did not share, a horror and a laughing-stock even to himself.

But no one had, as yet, guessed this much and so, though he had done nothing really wicked, our big friend stood accused of sullen temper, malignity, hypocrisy, and brooding vice. A Jim-myth had grown up, in which he always figured as a "bad ane." Without any other cause than a kind of uneasiness produced by the sight of the tattered, hulking, red-haired Giganticulus with the gloomy freckled face and the huge powerful hands, all prophesied that he would "live to be hangit." The little children fled shrieking at his approach: the women wondered why he had not done something wicked lately: the men, turned at last by their wives and the efforts of the Reverend Simon, left him severely alone.

Tuchan, like most other places, was terrified by the *Unusual*.

Jim still remained in the Quarries. Fortunately for him he was too good a workman, with his mighty strength, to be dismissed, and, as a means of distraction from his troubles, he toiled harder than ever. In loneliness though. Even the foreman, who had been his friend, now confined himself to curt orders and was quite unceremonious when Jim fell, which he did more frequently now, to gazing out over the Calder Valley towards the Ballandaroch Pass.

"Macdonald," he would cry, "dinna stan' aboot like a gawkie. Ye're paid to work, no to dream." Then Jim would clutch his pick-axe and fall to like a demon.

Our James cared for nothing but a quiet life. Notoriety or singularity of any description he loathed from the bottom of his heart. Soft and affectionate by nature he would have liked to be on good terms with everyone, and lo! by

the ingenious malice of destiny, behold him set apart in a manner as marked as it was absolute! The one craving which still possessed him was to be like other people, and again behold him as unlike everyone else as is possible to imagine! He could never be happy while filled with disgust at his huge size. Everything connected with it had always brought him either shame or trouble, and now fresh trouble, greater than any he had ever experienced, was waiting for him in the spring.

The short, dark, bitter days of the Scotch winter went slowly by for our red-headed outlaw, drawing out almost imperceptibly a little longer till the snows melted and came leaping down the old scarred sides of the mountains into the Calder Valley. Amidst all this shouting of cataracts and running of rills and calling of birds and blossoming of hedge-rows and greening of woods James remained a prisoner in the black dungeon of melancholy — and Jessie McLure came back to Tuchan.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE Reverend Simon invited Jessie and Mrs. McLure to spend a fortnight in Tuchan. Miss McManus, the Dominie's sister, and, that all things might be fulfilled, Johnny Findlater were to be also of the party.

The train that bore Jessie to Duke's Ferry puffed along to an idly sentimental tune, a tune which some theatrical company, travelling to the county town near which they now lived, had made popular. "Ti-tum — ti-tum — ti-tum — ti-tum," throbbed the engine "Ti-tum — ti-tum," and then broke into words:

"Of all the tales I ever heard
The one I liked the best
Was of a land quite too absurd
Yet nicer than the rest ;
Where skewered game flew down the breeze,
And pigs ran ready roasted,
And chocolates grew on the trees,
And all the bread was toasted."

Idle words i' faith, but with some memories of not very remote childhood in them. Jessie was growing into a woman now, past eighteen and a dark, stormy slip, whose eyes and face were always aglow. Time and time again the chorus repeated itself to the beat of the throbbing engine:

"In Wonderland, my Wonderland,
(Oh! many's the voyage there I planned)
The children play without a nurse
And money jingles in one's purse.
Oh! Wonderland, dear Wonderland,
I always seemed to understand
A holiday far, far away
In Wonderland."

Through lofty braes on which the gorse blossomed with golden blaze, by vast, deep silent valleys, huge barren mountains, and big blue lakes, passed the train; by stations with queer unpronounceable names; by forests in which the red deer ran; and moors, over which the young grouse was beginning to try ambitious flights; by naked spaces in which tiny cattle grazed; by purple solitudes where the grey boulders lay, like sheep. Up and down went the train, leaving the old high-road sometimes far below them, running sometimes level with it, the high-road down which the soldiers of the first and second Georges had marched, when they made such a poor show against the naked claymores of fierce Highland men. Everything was lonely and peaceful here now. Occasionally, as the train stopped in a station, it was overshadowed by some huge rock to which clung a summer boarding house. All this was the land of civilisation, whither came Glasgow folks for their holidays. But Jessie was not going to stop here, where romance once lived and was still hallowed. She was going back to Wonderland. "Ti-tum — ti-tum — ti-tum — ti-tum" throbbed the engine as it bore her swiftly along, and then sang:

"To Wonderland, my Wonderland,
With all its shores of golden sand,
Where children lived 'neath skies of blue
And laughed and played the whole day through.
Oh! Wonderland, my Wonderland,
By Heaven's unchanging azure spanned,
Or stars at eve—Dear Make-believe,
Dear Wonderland!"

Not such a Wonderland was Tuchan indeed, but the days of her childhood seemed to Jessie at the same time very near and very far-off. She wondered if everything would look the same, the little village, the Manse, the school-house, Calder's Farm,—she must walk over there one after-

noon—and the huge valley and the old mountains with their scarred sides, on whose tops the wind moaned perpetually, and the gigantic twins, More and Moich.

The scenery became wilder and lonelier. Once through a rift in the hills she caught a distant glimpse of sea sparkling in the midday sun. Mrs. McLure fanned herself with her pocket handkerchief.

"It's very hot," she said, "but luckily we've only three hours mair."

"Only three hours! Only three hours to the borders of Wonderland." Jessie shivered all over and stared with compressed lips and flashing eyes out of the window.

A thought! The train took it up, shaped it into words, and thumped it out with maddening monotony.

"Would Johnny Findlater still be the same? Would Johnny Findlater still be the same? Would Johnny Findlater still be the same?"

She stared out of the carriage-window at the inhospitable deserts of the moors and the towering company of the mountains.

"Would Johnny Findlater still be the same?" Jessie belonged to that class of persons who centre all the tempestuous violence of their affections on one, unique, solitary, exclusive unit of the human race. Though she had not seen him since the days of Tuchan, when they both stood upon the threshold of adolescence, the blue-eyed, fair-haired Johnny had been ever and still was the goal to which all her existence tended.

"Would he still be the same?"

"Have a sandwich, Jessie?" asked Mrs. McLure, opening her reticule.

Jessie munched one with difficulty.

"I'm no hungry," she said.

"It is very hot in here," replied the farmer's wife.

"Very," replied Jessie absently.

But it was the thought which made her wonder whether Johnny Findlater would still be the same, that spoiled her lunch. "Ti-tum — ti-tum — ti-tum — ti-tum," always to the same thought puffed the train, and it was nearly evening before they reached the flourishing little port on the shores of the big sea-loch, the port of Duke's Ferry. The coach drove them to Tuchan on the following day, over the Ballandarroch Pass and through the Valley of Calder, and as it deposited them (its only passengers) and their luggage in front of the Inn about five o'clock in the afternoon, our Reverend Simon was there to receive them. A smile creased his broad, white face; his square, white hand was outstretched in welcome. He boomed a hearty greeting in his fog-in-the-throat voice.

"Johnny cannot get away till the day after to-morrow," he said after the first salutations were over.

CHAPTER XXX

HOW everything had flashed back into Jessie's memory during that journey on the coach, yet, in fact, was everything just the same—the valley and the mountains and Calder's Farm, with its low barns and long, low front as she saw it from the top of the coach in the little wood of trees that surrounded it? Was the village just as she imagined it would be, with its white-walled cottages, and long, thin, winding street? Were the loch and the rough, rolling hills behind it the loch and the hills of the days gone by? Every stone in the place, every cloud in the sky, seemed familiar to her, but were they all exactly the same? It seemed, when once the first impression had passed away, that the Reverend Simon and they had only been parted for a week. How familiar his face and his voice were! Time had made little impression upon him apparently, but somehow Tuchen was not just as she had expected it. There was a change for which she was not prepared, and the thought once more obsessed her.

“Would Johnny be exactly the same?”

How she wanted everything to be the same, and how, oh! how she wanted Johnny to be the same!

To-morrow was the Sabbath. She would walk over to Calder's Farm in the afternoon and, at any rate, *that* should be the same, unless Farmer Thomson had made great alterations.

Before retiring to put the finishing touches to his sermon, the Reverend Simon gave them the history of Tuchen since they left—all the births, marriages, and deaths; how little Angus had become a stalwart fisherboy, almost

old enough to boast a boat of his own; how a new Dominie had come to the school instead of their old friend, Mr. Maitland; how Farmer Thomson's boy was the clever boy now, though not half so clever as Johnny Findlater used to be; and then (oh! delight to Jessie's ears) how Johnny had surpassed all expectations; was newly the winner of a great prize at one of the big Scotch Universities; would, even as all prophesied, shed great light, in days to come, on Tuchan.

"Do you remember Jim Macdonald?" asked the Minister.

"That wild unchancy lad," replied Mrs. McLure. Jessie nodded.

She had often thought of the big red-headed scoundrel who nearly killed her Johnny, hoping he was gone from Tuchan or that, at any rate, if he remained, he might still be the same for her still to hate him. How she had shuddered at that big, lumbering figure; those fat, freckled cheeks; those huge, red hands! Jim Macdonald used to be a perfect horror. Was *he* still the same?

"I regret to say," continued the Reverend Simon, "Macdonald has turned out worse than ever I thought he would. I'm sure I don't know what will become of him. For years past he has been cruel enough to delight in frightening the tiny children. Can you imagine such a thing? There's not a woman in the place who has a good word to say for him, and that is a very bad sign, is it not, Mrs. McLure? Quite lately I had to forbid him to come to the kirk any more, a dreadful thing to have to do, but the lad behaved quite disgracefully, trying to make the younger children laugh, and bellowing out of tune in the psalms for the express purpose of disconcerting *me*. I greatly fear he has turned out low, sullen, ignorant, and revengeful. He is still working in the Quarries. Of course I should be the last to interfere with him, if he has a decent and sober occupation, but I don't suppose it will last long, and I

can't help thinking it would be the best thing if he left the village." No — the Reverend Simon was not yet satisfied.

"What a pity!" said Mrs. McLure placidly.

Jessie, however, that young lady of violent tendencies, could not help another throb of delight almost equal to the one she felt on hearing of Johnny's success. Jim was still the same, or worse. She had always thought him a "bad ane." How true had these forebodings been! And now the more uncertainty of Johnny's fidelity to old loves haunted her, the more repulsion grew at the memory of Jim. She fed one emotion by another, as ever, sacrificed Jim to Johnny. This girl's hatreds were indeed vindictive, her passions unswerving. Was she not one of those who only see in black and white, reject or accept, move in light or dusk, are incapable of subtle shades or fine distinctions. Could she ever give the benefit of the doubt? Were not people to her either lions or jackals; eagles or carrion-tasting vultures? Was not everything either fair or foul? There was an intense egotism behind this violence of contrast and an intense conviction. Jessie was a dangerous slip of a girl. "Which are the more dangerous, women with great convictions or women without any?" moodily mutters the philosopher, who has not interrupted the course of the narrative for some time.

The next day, of course, she went to kirk. The Macdonald family, excepting Jim, were in their seats. An especial air of dignity sat upon them all, as if they were trying to obliterate the disgrace brought on them by the blackguard of the village. Alexander's lip was longer than ever, and Euphemia's costume, especially the hat, in more retired taste.

Jessie noted with secret delight the obvious uneasiness of her bugbear's relations. Many were the greetings she received. Old faces looked on her from every side. Old

faces altered just a little. A few she missed. No, Tuchan was not exactly the same. Time had done something to change it.

Would it have changed Johnny Findlater? Dr. Spens was there and bade her how-d'you do. He was more placid than ever and growing rather grey.

"I hear we are to have Johnny back," said he. "Back for a few days. I hope he won't look down on us, now that he is such a brilliant young man."

Jessie flushed. It was just what she had been fearing.

The Doctor looked at the dark glowing face.

"You've come to break the hearts of our youthful swains," he said, smiling. "If Johnny is too conceited, you must take him down a peg."

She flushed again. It was just what she had been wondering if she could do, in the case of his having forgotten.

Yet, thought she, *his* memory would not be short.

"Ah! Miss Jessie," continued the Doctor after a pause, "we grow up to men and women. We are boys and girls no longer and the world becomes a different place for us. Perhaps you haven't realised it yet. You've grown up bonny and, I'm sure, good-hearted. May you be spared much pain. I'm longing to have our Johnny back. I'm told he will be a famous man some day. Nearly all your old school-fellows were nice, decent lads and lasses, nearly all. But you and Johnny were the pick of them, though I mustn't flatter you, Miss Jessie. I expect you have enough flattery already. Who shall despise Tuchan now it has produced a beauty and a famous man, or rather a young man who is going to be famous? We are most of us worthy, fairly contented people here, Miss Jessie, though we may not be celebrated. I believe there is only one really bad character in the village. Think of that, Miss Jessie, and don't come back to laugh at Tuchan, which contains so much goodness."

"Of course I don't laugh at Tuchan," replied Jessie. "How can you think so? But who is your bad character, Dr. Spens?" she added, lowering her eyes and digging up the ground with the point of her shoe. A disingenuous manœuvre, for she guessed, was certain in her own mind, that the doctor could mean no one else except Jim Macdonald.

"Oh!" answered the Doctor with a shade of confusion in his gentle, melancholy, honest face. "I'm not certain I ought to have spoken about him. It's not fair to tell tales out of school and I don't know that there is any definite or really serious charge against the lad. I, at any rate, have never had any grave fault to find with him."

"Never?" inquired Jessie.

"You know then?" said the Doctor, catching meaning in her voice.

"The Minister told me last night. You talk of Jim Macdonald."

"Yes, yes," replied Dr. Spens hurriedly. "I did refer to Jim Macdonald. I have no personal accusation against him, none at all, but it is a general impression that he is thoroughly wild and unsatisfactory. There are a great many complaints and a great many unpleasant stories about him in the village. You may have heard some."

"A few," answered Jessie.

"And so," continued the Doctor, "as there is never smoke without fire, one can't help believing there is something in these complaints and stories. I've always tried to make out a good case for Jim Macdonald, both to myself and other people, but I've had to admit at last that the evidence is all against him."

"All against him," echoed Jessie, scratching the ground with her parasol.

"Yes," replied Dr. Spens sadly, "and I'm downright

sorry for it. He certainly behaved abominably to the Minister, and, though I suspect a certain amount of exaggeration, he seems to have behaved very badly and wickedly in the village. I tried once or twice to talk to him seriously (I pulled him half out of the grave as a small boy; and that seems to knit some kind of bond between us), but the lad was regularly sullen and obstinate and only said "ou aye" or "naw" or remained silent, when I put any question to him, and so, what can I do? The only thing which puzzles me, though, is that he works steadily."

"In the Quarries?" observed Jessie.

"In the Quarries," answered the Doctor. "He works very hard for his age. Well, we've all got our good and our bad points, and the best we can do is to be charitable. I only wish I could say more for Jim Macdonald. Now, good-bye, Miss Jessie, I am keeping *you* from your dinner and must get back to *mine*. You will all come up and have supper with me one night, when Johnny arrives, I hope."

Jessie remained rather silent and absent-minded through dinner time.

"Where are you off to, dear?" asked Mrs. McLure, when she came down afterwards in a light summer walking skirt.

"I'm gaein' for a daunder to the Farm and back again ower the hills," answered her daughter. "It's such a fine afternoon."

"Very weel, dear," answered the mother and closed her eyes as she murmured, "Dinna be too late."

Jessie walked briskly down the path into the main-road. Dr. Spens' words kept on running in her head. "The evidence is all against him — *him* — *him*. If the Doctor says so, he must be bad."

The more she fed on her ancient repulsion to Jim, the more splendid and beautiful appeared Johnny Findlater

to her memory — blue-eyed, angel-faced Virtue compared with ugly, freckled, red-haired Uncouthness and Wickedness.

Perhaps there was some excuse for her. As she walked briskly up the high-road of Tuchan, her feet once more beat time to Princess Honey-Sweet's song in the last pantomime.

“Oh! how I loved that strange countrie
And wondered if I'd go,
When I was quite grown-up and free,
Where life was ordered so.
I hoped to find a fairy ring
And fly there with a wish,
Or magic carpet on the wing,
Or sail there in a dish.”

She was only a day off Wonderland. Oh! that the day would pass.

Thus thought this half-child, half-woman, and forgot the good Doctor's other words.

“We grow up and become men and women. We are children no longer and the world is a different place for us. May you not suffer too much pain!”

CHAPTER XXXI

JIM lay at full length in his eyrie amid the hills behind Tuchan.

Far, far below him to the west lay the little village, and, by a half-turn on to his elbow, he could see across the lovely Valley of Calder, where was no habitation except the Farm with its long low buildings in a clump of trees, and no sign of life except a few cattle — pigmy beasts from that great height.

By the bases of the mountains ran the road, winnowing down to a thread, and climbing at last in tiny spirals up the Ballandarroch Pass. He did not know that down this road the coach had yesterday brought Jessie McLure and her mother back to Tuchan.

No — ignorant of this news lay our James in his eyrie and buried deep in the black dungeon of his melancholy.

The spring, now on the threshold of the hottest summer known for years, had been different from any other spring in Jim's memory. The shouting of cataracts and running of rills and calling of birds and blossoming of hedgerows and greening of woods, though the same phenomena undoubtedly took place every year, seemed to have an inner meaning. There was at first a wonderful joy in all this budding and waking and outbursting and putting forth ungrudgingly of life and leaf and blossom, a lighting up of the heart, new to our James, as he watched the face of Nature change and tender greens cover the unsightly browns of bush, bramble, and bank. "It is the birth of spring; now grasses return to the fields and rivers overflow their banks." How simple are the words of the half-jovial half-resigned Roman poet and how familiar!

(Though our James had naturally never heard them.) How simple are they and yet they give the same catch of the heart that spring gives! All the great stories of the world are old and all of them are contemporaries. It is only the frivolous and shallow, the unfeeling and foolish, who laugh at the old, old stories. The humble and wise remember them secretly in their heart, and ponder over them sorrowfully. Spring comes and goes and youth only goes — youth, whether gay or sad, lonely or thronged with friends. They are alike in the exuberance of their griefs and passions. About them there is no restraint, only the ache of desire and the longing to appease the unsatisfied. Millions and millions of buds, thousands of fluttering, cheeping, fluffy things, of creeping humble lives, of mad, riotous scatterings and tumblings in the woods, of mouths and beaks always agape! Put forth, O prodigal Spring, put forth! Put forth with one hand, beautifully and opulently, and take with the other, secret, cruel, mysterious Spring! "The leaves return to the trees and the Graces dance hand in hand." You are lovely and gracious as youth, but merciless as youth is too. When you are called Autumn, you shall weep and wail for the beauties and cruelties of your youth.

Old, old is this story and the poets have sung it from time immemorial. There is nothing half so sad as a lovely spring day. "What we love, we must lose," whispers the Spring, as she looks upon us with smiling, immortal face. "Ask not the reason! You may call me cruel, but I am unhappy too, sorrowful with the ineffable sorrow of the artist, who makes what he knows must perish, who kills what he loves best of all, who knows that all real beauty is born of the depths of sadness."

Put forth! O beautiful, prodigal Spring, put forth with the joy of the wanton and the pang of the mother and the sacred sadness of the artist.

Old, old is the story and there are some who laugh at it. Old, old are the sorrows of the poets and many have laughed at *them*. Perhaps, even, *they* have laughed at themselves. Their hearts have been full of a sad, delicate irony, while their eyes brimmed with tears.

For such is the laughter of the poets.

Our Jim, then, for the first time became conscious that in this decking of old earth with green twines, sparkling in diamonds, and white blossoms and golden ornament, in those scents of freshly turned earth and fragrant rains, in these new songs and earliest butterflies and humblest lately opened flowers, was something he had never before experienced.

I am not trying to make out that his sensations were in the slightest degree unusual, though, in consequence of his peculiar circumstances and peculiar constitution, they may have been exceptionally violent. Indeed this peculiar season of youth, while it furnishes some of the most deathless verse in the annals of English literature and some of the most pregnant and heart-felt philosophy, at the same time yields a plentiful harvest of jokes in the comic papers. Old, old, old is the story of spring. Old is all poetry, old is all philosophy, old are all jokes. Yet the human mind still has the same experiences and must find comfort elsewhere. The story of spring is the one of nearest import in the whole world, the "touch of nature that makes it kin." Oh! many are its outward manifestations and perhaps all serve a purpose, even those "jokes" in the "comic" papers. The vulgar and material seek consolation in the vulgar and material, the secret and beautiful in the secret and beautiful.

The story of James in Part III is the old, old story of the spring.

Was he not, to begin with, an outlaw, an Ishmaelite with every man's hand against him; with no tongue to tell his praise; a figure of fun, whose uncouth lineaments were scratched on every white-washed wall in Tuchan?

Was he not utterly alone?

It is impossible indeed (in the biographer's opinion) to drive deeply enough into first principles and say definitely whether he was like this because of what he was or whether he was what he was because he was like this. For altho' the study of the Scotch Giant's life has inclined him to a kind of fatalism, he resents the uttermost forms of dogma owing to a fantastic desire to have all the possible premises before finally committing himself. At any rate — whatever the reason of it — our Giganticulus could not help (to some extent) realising his isolation, and there were times during the last three or four years when, resting on his pick, he felt a strange kinship with the mountains lonely as himself. Such melancholic broodings, however, passed quickly enough in the fresh air of the hills and in the healthy sweat of manual labour.

Then he had not been a declared outlaw.

But now, after the decree of banishment from among the congregation of men, the birth of Spring seemed to make him, huge and uncouth as he was, all emotionally tremulous and quiveringly sensitive to these new influences, and, all at once, the peculiar sense of the impermanence of everything, equalling almost a feeling of personal loss, the sense of the new springing up from the old, of the new to become old itself in time, of the eternal sorrowful secret behind the fair new mask of changing Nature which made her face, if one could really see it, sad with the appalling sadness of the Ages, was engendered in his mind, as it is in the minds of all sensitive human beings. Then came the full realisation of his loneliness, sweeping over him and overwhelming him.

Our Giganticulus was like a man fallen overboard into a grey sea. He might cry aloud, but was there any one to help him?

Or, rather, he was like a man in a dream who knows

that some great destiny hangs on a few words to be spoken, and yet cannot make an articulate sound.

Yes — yes, there was some indefinable thing beyond him that he must try to seize but which yet persistently defied capture. Didn't all his huge body ache for it?

He could not rid himself of this haunting, sorrowful thing day or night. The dreams of his childhood came oftener and more clearly than ever. Jessie McLure, Johnny Findlater, the Dominie, appeared to him and spoke to him, visible and tangible as flesh and blood, not waning and shadowy as phantoms. He heard their voices sometimes even in the daytime and stopped to listen. Then the foreman would cry: "Wauk up, Macdonald. Ye're no paid to dream ava'." More than ever he wished now that he was like other boys of decent, average, unremarkable size. Then none of his misfortunes would have happened. Then he might perhaps —

That spring the girls of Tuchan, as they made faces at him and laughed, seemed to have something quite new and wonderful about them.

They and the boys of his own age had discovered a new way of talking to each other — in couples.

Our Giganticulus had no girl to talk to. He would have been too shy if he had. All the same he found a secret pain and a secret pleasure in thinking about them.

He lay in his eyrie that afternoon, full of secret, glorious sentiment.

But let us not desecrate the shy recesses of his mind any further. It is enough to indicate our Jim's feelings at this precise point of his history, and to show how in his loneliness he adumbrated an intangible, remote, responsive something to which he might call in time of need. "What a ridiculous Coxcomb!" sighs the philosopher.

CHAPTER XXXII

THERE was no sound in the heated, hushed air but the coo of wood-pigeons from a neighbouring birch-wood and from far below by Calder's Farm the occasional lowing of a few pigmy cows which moved about in one of those small fields into which the great slopes of the valley were parcelled. They climbed up — these fields — divided by low, half-tumbled down, and uneven stone-walls, to within two hundred yards of where our Gigan-ticulus lay. For the most part they were empty, but in the last of them all was a young bull which began bellowing sullenly, bellowing unintermittently thro' the drowsy afternoon. Now it is useless to deny that human beings are only a higher form of animal and that the latter have many feelings in common with the former. Jessie McLure was daundering with thoughts of Johnny in her head; Jim was lying in his eyrie full of desire for that something lacking in his life, while the young bull — but let us explain that by the edict of Farmer Thomson's cowman this young bull, tho' youthful and very much inclined for female society, had been separated from those same cows which Jim heard lowing by Calder's Farm. Hence, hearing them low as well, he bellowed in answer, making, perhaps, in his own language, mighty resentful remarks about his acquaintance, the cowman, or else, in occasionally gentler tones, pretty speeches to his lady friends. Conversation, however, carried on under such difficulties, did not afford much solace, and, in consequence, he was feeling very fretful, peevish, and tempestuous, if not fierce. In this state of mind the

animal lounged about the pasture, swished his tufted tail against his flanks, and from time to time pawed the ground.

Jim watched him with vague interest and head full of all those other strange secret things.

His eye roamed from the fretful young bull to the pigmy cows and Calder's Farm; then over the valley, where the grey stones lay, looking like sheep, and towards the mountains with deep ravines in their ancient sides (mere cracks at that distance), and the scattered firs clinging to their rugged nakedness, and the burn, which the melting snows fed, hurrying along their bases, and along the road, winding between low untidy stone-walls and through broken-down gates, winding and climbing and descending at no height or depth, till it plunged down into the great basin, scooped at the pedestals of More and Moich, and, after zigzagging through black walls of fir, finally came out on the plateau between the two great peaks, always capped in snow, and commanded a panoramic view of the country beyond, which Jim had never seen.

There are some natures that leap from one extreme to another. A minute before, our Giganticulus had been happy in solacing himself with a dream, a daydream, a wakingdream, a dream so vivid that it brought him almost as much pleasure as if it had been real. Let us not plunge too far into the shy recesses of his mind and discover what that dream was. Now, in a flash, the melancholy of a hot spring or rather early summer afternoon surged over him, and he felt utterly alone, utterly wretched, utterly useless.

The old, feeble, querulous, and cowardly wail rose up within him once more.

"If only I hadna been sae big I sud ha' been happy!"

Then an intense longing to climb the Pass and see the great country beyond, which he had never yet seen, came

over him. Anything was better than to be the despised and rejected of all in Tuchan. The black dungeon of his melancholy compassed him round about, but was there no escape from that haggard, shrinking, ghost-pale warder, Fear?

Supposing he got up from his eyrie now and walked down the hillside, a not stupendously difficult task, he could reach the plateau in six or seven hours. Another day would take him to Duke's Ferry, so he believed. Then he could see whether it was not possible to shake off the fate that had always hitherto clung round him.

Surely it was possible to escape from the dungeon! A few steps and he could be free. Listen! There are stealthy creeping feet along the corridor and someone brushes the walls, someone who is always waiting and watching. It is the haggard, ghost-pale warder. The prison door is locked and there is no escape. He could never bear the mocking eyes of strangers; their mocking tongues. It was useless to try and deceive himself any longer. He would never be the same size as ordinary people. He was a foot taller than anyone else in the village and growing still. Better, however, those he knew than those he did not know! He must live, die and be buried in Tuchan. That was his fate. He must endure it.

During these meditations, Jim had become entirely oblivious to his surroundings, a trick of his we have seen. Arrived, however, at the above conclusion, he once more returned to the outer world and, as he had been staring with eyes that perceived nothing over the valley, to his surprise discovered that a human figure was climbing up the hillside towards him.

He saw that it was a woman or rather a girl, for she seemed to climb without fatigue. Who was she?

Nearer and nearer she came, carrying a red parasol and wearing a white muslin dress, girt with a red sash at the waist.

None of the village girls would carry a red parasol, thought Jim. This must be a stranger. His melancholy vanished as suddenly as it had come.

And, as is the way with excitable natures, his heart began to thump on the grass beneath him.

Who could it be?

O! youth is the season of dreams and day-dreams. An accomplished dreamer can imagine anything.

The girl opened a rickety wooden gate and entered the field beneath him.

CHAPTER XXXIII

AT that moment another actor in the scene noticed her as he lounged about discontentedly at the farther end of the field.

"What the devil is that?" said the young bull to himself, feeling exactly like an irritable landed proprietor who sees a trespasser unwarrantably walking in his private grounds, and rolling an ominous eye as he caught sight of an intruder and one, moreover, carrying a colour particularly offensive to him and his race. With steaming nose lifted and tail a-swish he stared at Jessie; then, with slow steps and fore-foot occasionally pawing the ground, moved towards the unconscious girl, adding to himself, "These vexatious strangers, who dress in such exasperating fashion, cannot be allowed." Jessie McLure never noticed the outraged animal. With mind full of Johnny Findlater and parasol lowered on Master Bull's side to keep off the afternoon sun, she slowly climbed her way up the steep grassy field.

Princess Honey-Sweet's song kept on running in her head that afternoon. O! youth in the season of songs and visions, when the songs still ring true, and the visions whisper, "We are from the gate of Horn."

Her heart kept time to tune and words:

"But now my dreams have all come true
A simpler way than this,
I've learnt you go there two by two
And find it with a kiss,
That happy land beyond the hills,
Beyond the purpling gloaming,
With mellow days and murmuring rills
And faithful couples roaming.

"In Wonderland, my Wonderland,
We'll walk together, hand in hand;
We'll keep our tryst, we'll keep our troth,
And love, dear love, shall keep us both,
In Wonderland, our Wonderland—
For we have joined the happy band,
Who walked of old thro' gleam and gold
In Wonderland."

Foolish and sentimental were the words of the song, no doubt, and foolish and sentimental was the tune, but such are the things that the heart of youth loveth, never doubting that they are true, never doubting that the dreams come from the gate of Horn, never suspecting that songs of happiness and love well from hearts full of sorrow. However, let us return to our muttons, or rather to our bull.

The animal's steps became quicker and quicker; occasionally he lowered head and snorted heavily through nostrils. As yet he was some way from Jessie McLure.

It was now that James Macdonald, who had never taken his eyes off the approaching Jessie, noticed the bull following her. He realised at once that the girl, whoever she might be, was in danger, rose from his hiding-place in the wood and shouted. Hardly had he done so, when the bull decided he must charge, if life was to be worth living. With head lowered and hooves drumming in the gallop, he bore down upon the object of his wrath.

Almost at one and the same moment Jessie heard the bull's bellow and the shout of James Macdonald, that cataclysmal shout, which no lungs but his could make. It merged with the bull's bellow, grew louder than it, swelled in an enormous volume of noise, and then suddenly ceased. All the hollow amphitheatre of the Calder Valley seemed to be reverberating to the rival voices of man and animal — man and bull bellowing together. She stopped; put hand to heart; looked this way and that. Her be-

wilderment and affright can be more easily imagined than described.

Is it not always irksome to have to grope after in a dozen or more sentences what must pass through the mind in a flash? No amount of hyphens or exclamation marks can give the breathless emotions of surprise and terror; the lightning effect of decisions made in a moment. All language halts. Yet, in spite of the inadequacy of words to reflect sensations of so rapid a nature, in this medium must some hint of the terrified girl's feelings be given, and the imagination of the reader do its best. What a rude awakening to her day dream had Jessie!

In front of her she beheld a huge and enormous figure, apparently that of a man, but by far the biggest man she had ever seen (it must be remembered that James was now nearly seven feet high), which cleared the low stone boundary wall of the field at a single leap and rushed towards her shouting, brandishing its arms, and moving with gigantic strides. To a young girl thinking, in a kind of ecstasy, of a boy-lover with blue eyes and golden hair, the sudden appearance of any man in a solitary place would have been somewhat terrifying. Judge then how appalling must have been the spectacle of this gigantic and extraordinary figure bounding towards her!

He shouted incoherently as he bounded. She made as if to flee from him.

Then remembered she the bull, momentarily forgotten in her terror of the monstrous man. Swiftly as that Hugeness approached her, the animal seemed to come more swiftly still. Its head was lowered, its hooves drummed the earth, its tail swished against its flanks.

She was, as it were, the apex of an equilateral, and the two terrors galloped towards her at right angles to each other.

Wonderland was in an instant forgotten. She began

to think only of self-preservation. How could she escape these perils which at the first lightning estimate seemed indeed equally dreadful? Her mind went dizzy for a moment. Then the power of calculation came back. She reckoned her chances.

Immediately they thus unfolded themselves.

The bull was obviously and indubitably resolved on attack, the man, strange and unprecedentedly enormous though he might be, probably animated by the intention of rescuing her. It was in his direction therefore that she must flee, if she wished to save her life. The huge figure's cries began to reach her in coherent expressions.

"Rin towards me, lassie! Rin for your life!"

Realising that the red parasol was a danger, Jessie flung it away and acted upon the hint of her would-be deliverer. Picking up muslin skirt high (this was no time for prudery) she ran towards James as fast as strong young legs would carry her.

Let us not "tire" either ourselves or our readers with "base comparisons," but how equivocal are all our standard values! Had Jim burst out upon Jessie alone, in a field bull-less, how quickly she would have run from him! But now a greater danger threatens and she flees to him as if to a saviour, fears of him practically non-existent. So do all our landmarks vanish in the shifting sands of life.

The next few moments seemed the flash of a dream. Was it really herself, who ran up the grassy hill with heart pounding side, the drum of the young bull's hooves sounding ever nearer behind her, and the strange creature's cries ringing dizzily above everything.

"Quicker! Quicker! Dinna fa' for the love of Heaven."

The distance between them seemed to be diminishing all the time not by yards but by incredible, immeasurable spaces. In her ears the thunder of hooves grew as loud as the sea, or the roar of street traffic. A hot scented

breath seemed to be blowing actually upon her neck. Suddenly she felt herself seized by an arm of gigantic strength and flung forward on her course with a violence that hurled her haphazard, headlong, anyhow into a tussock of grass. A great shout and a huge bellow answered each other. . . . Then the eerie dream flashed away.

CHAPTER XXXIV

SHE recovered consciousness again to find water trickling down her face, and somebody, in a man's voice, calling her name.

"Jessie! Jessie! Dinna say I've hurt ye, my lass!"

Still feeling dizzy (she had been lying on a grassy bank dimly aware for a little time of a monstrous figure bending over her). The black-eyed daughter of the McLures sat up and looked at the owner of the voice, concealing the while as best she could a certain amount of trepidation. At once all the recent peril flashed back. She remembered the monstrous man. This must be he. It was indeed. He knelt by her side with a dripping bonnet in his hands, and spoke again, shyly this time and with hesitation, now he saw she was conscious.

"Jessie? Miss McLure? D'ye no recognise me?" Somewhere or other, in past times, she remembered having seen the face before. Still stunned and dizzy and incapable of distinct sight. She thought — wondered — searched the past. Who on earth was the monstrous man? He seemed indeed amiable and pacific.

Stared at her moreover with a shy, eager, devouring look.

Sight became clearer. That freckled face! Those huge masses of twisted, tangled red hair! It could only be — be —

"Ye'll no recognise me mebbe, Miss McLure," continued her rescuer. "I was at school wi' ye five years syne. Ma name's — "

"Jim Macdonald?" said Jessie in a low voice, before he could finish the sentence.

"Jim Macdonald," answered the monstrous man.

There was a long silence. At first Jessie could not in the least realise what had occurred. Yet it was true. Her life had been saved by *Jim*, — Jim, whom she had always hated, hated still, about whom no one had a good word to say — Jim, worst character in the village.

What could she ever owe him more than that life of hers? O! deep in debt to him was she now. Why hadn't it been Johnny who saved her life? How beautiful that would have been! Why not any other person in Tuchan? A stranger even? Anyone would have been better than Jim Macdonald. She loathed him and felt she ought to be passionately grateful to him. She couldn't be. She must be. How hideous he was. Worse than ever. And everyone said he was wicked. He had always tried to toady her. This saving of her life seemed only a supreme instance of toadyism. Ugh! She shuddered slightly. Then a feeling of terror came over her now that she was saved from the bull. He *must* be really wicked. She still stared at the huge countenance of her preserver in silence and, as she did so, the look of shy eagerness changed to one of complete, utter dejection. Was not the ugly, freckled face only that of a boy? Fear and hatred became a little smaller. "He's only a boy," she thought to encourage herself. "I needna be frightened o' him. Of course he's only a boy." Then aloud, "How d'you do, Mr. Macdonald? I'm verra pleased to meet you again." It was the utmost she could do in the state of her mind — the utmost. Only a little more and she must have burst into tears between the irony of the fate that had overtaken her, her fear of Jim and the terror of her recollections. No tears tho' in front of Jim Macdonald. Anything was better than that. "You've grown sae big," she added. "I didna recognise you at first." A thrill of agony went through the body of our Giganticulus. He had again forgotten for a moment

that he was not the same size as other people. Miserably he now saw Jessie's eyes wander over him from head to foot and both eyes and mouth open as she took in his proportions.

"They never told me you'd grown sae big," she continued. "I think you're the biggest man I've ever seen." Every word pierced like a sharp little blade. He had just enough strength to answer, "Yes, I'm unco big, Jessie."

She fell into silence once more.

Yes, Jim had saved her life undoubtedly. There was an attitude of meanness in her feeling towards him, which was trying to find a *point d'appui*. She ought to have been all generous impulse towards her saviour, but ugh! that freckled face, that huge body, and huge tangled hair made such a thing impossible. Had gratitude overcome all her other impulses, she might have rehabilitated her old enemy's name in the village, but then who wanted to be grateful? Any little thing would serve to turn the scale against him, any stick would do to beat him with. Jim could not really be a hero. It was impossible. She lived in the light and the dusk, drew only in black and white without fine shades. Yes, Jim was hideous and a villain and could be nothing else. But, to be *sure*, she must get the story out of this gigantic, uncouth, mouthing creature before she went back home.

"How you frightened me at first," said she as amiably as she could. "You shouted sae loud and ran sae fast and looked sae big, that I should certainly hae rin awa' or fainted if the bull hadna been after me. But how did you manage to save me? How Jim?" she said, laying her hand on his knee for a brief delicious second. At her touch and words a thrill of more than mortal bliss shot through James Macdonald's huge and sensitive body. On a sudden he realised how, for the first time, that enormous size and strength had been of some use. His

great freckled face beamed with pride. Alas, alas! a fall will come after. What gave him the feeling of pride will enable Jessie to minimise the whole adventure from his point of view, on the side of the heroic; make it possible for her to attribute to him no exceptional bravery; strengthen ten times over her repulsion.

Answered Jim to the question:

"I picked ye up and threw ye ahint me. Then I waited for the bull: he wasna sae very far away, ye ken. I juist waited sideways on and threw him ower an' — an' I think I broke his neck."

Jessie McLure looked at him in a sort of stupefied astonishment. James' story seemed hardly credible.

"You threw the bull ower and broke his neck?" she gasped.

"I'm thinkin' sae," replied James Macdonald with almost demure self-satisfaction. Jessie looked at him again. He had saved her life, but what sort of creature was this who could wrestle with ferocious beasts and break their necks? He must be something really inhuman, repulsive. Instinctively she drew her skirts and herself a little bit away from him. Jim was too happy to notice the movement or ascribe it to the usual cause that removed everybody from him. He felt so happy that his shyness momentarily disappeared. He had something he wished to explain.

"I'm speirin' that I didna hurt ye, Jessie, when I threw ye on the grass. The bull was sae close that I had to staund between him and you."

"Not at all," murmured Jessie faintly. Continued Jim, as the impulse to confide grew stronger: "Ye asked how I managed to save ye. Weel, it was this way. When I stood waitin' for the bull, suddenly I felt stronger, ten times stronger than I ever felt afore. Ye canna guess how strong I felt then, Jessie. It was naethin' ava to owerthrow

the bull. I could hae rolled six ower and I saw everythin' as thro' a Red Mist. I've only been sae ance afore in ma life. Ance afore I hae felt that feelin' o' strength extraordinair', when I — "

The next second Jim was scarlet from his red hair to the rim of his jersey. In that second the past came back and he remembered that this last time was when he broke Johnny Findlater's head, floored the Dominie, and pushed Jessie down. Yes — back came the past, bringing with it all he had suffered at school from Johnny and the girl, bringing with it all his old adoration for Jessie, multiplied ten times, a hundredfold, a thousandfold, immeasurably. In that second she became what he had waited for the whole spring through all that time of shouting of cataracts and running of rills and calling of birds and blossoming of hedgerows and greening of woods: became the joy hidden in that season of budding and waking and bursting, and putting forth of leaf and life and blossom: became its sorrow too. His blood buzzed in his temples as he looked at her dark glowing face and dark flashing eyes, and his huge body quivered all over. Something seemed to be carrying him along with irresistible force and pace towards an unknown goal. He knew now for what he had been longing. Here it was at his side and yet, somehow, farther off than ever. . . . How he hoped that his unlucky words had not recalled the bad old times to Jessie! He wanted to be friends with her more than he had ever wanted to be friends with anyone. The bad old times must pass from all their memories. There was no Johnny Findlater now to stand between them. It was *he*, who had always turned Jessie against Jim. The village might speak ill of him, but he had saved Jessie's life; his size had done it, and *she* would know. Yet all the time, under the riot of new forces and new wishes and new hopes, was the greatest feeling of sadness that James Macdonald had ever

known, in spite of the fact that his short life had been far from a happy one.

He looked at her with shy, eager, devouring look, half hoping that she would guess and half fearing.

James Macdonald had fallen in love. As for Jessie, she guessed from the rush of blood into Jim's face and his sudden silence the occasion on which he last had that feeling of superhuman strength. The day came back to her almost as clearly as it had come back to him. All her old *hate* of Jim came back, multiplied ten times, a hundred times, a thousandfold, immeasurably, in spite of the fact that Jim had saved her life. This great obligation only made her hate him more. He was now something abnormal and inhuman, something like the beast which he had vanquished on her behalf, something for which she need feel no emotion of pity or affection, only of hatred. What credit was it for a beast to vanquish a beast? There was nothing heroic in a great animal of Jim's size and strength vanquishing another animal. Might there have been some base, low motive behind his action? Now, if Johnny Findlater had overthrown the bull, Johnny, whose strength of body had never been great, it would have been grand, glorious, sublime. Like Jim she wished for the impossible. There were two poles to her world — the love of Johnny and the hatred of Jim. To our Giganticulus she grudged every noble and brave thing done because it had not been the other's deed. She wished for her friend to be all white, her enemy to be all black. A strange form of idealism and yet one indubitably and in very truth — the first bitter-sweet fruit of her passionate egotism, which never thought of Jim, but only of what was wanted for the gratification of this Johnny-idealization; this making-true of the impossible.

And so it came about that Jim's story made him more repulsive than ever to Jessie and that she gave him no credit

for courage and skill in this saving of her life. Yet unable or unwilling to tell him the truth, and indeed there seemed no necessity for it, she stammered a few words of thanks. "You've — you've saved my life," and then added, "but now I must be gaein hame. Mither will be gettin' anxious. It's ower late." Then rose she from the little grass bank on which James had placed her (Faugh! to think that she had been carried in his arms), could not, however, repress a slight cry at the pain of a bruised shoulder. "Can ye reach hame alane, Jessie?" asked Jim, rising too and towering above her till she felt like a little child. "I'm dootin' I hurt ye after a'."

"Oh! I can easily walk. It's only my shoulder hurts a little and now the giddiness has passed awa' entirely."

"Can I no help ye, Jessie, by walkin' in wi' ye a pairt o' the way? The Meenister and me is no guid friends, but I could tak' ye to the road."

"No thank you, Jim." She hunted for an excuse. "It wouldna be richt for us to walk together."

"No richt?"

"No. You're Mr. Macdonald now, you see, an' — an' I'm Miss McLure. We hardly know each other, do we?" She held out her hand with a forced smile.

"Good-bye," she said.

"Good-bye," answered Jim, his freckled face fallen in bewildered dejection, and then, while shyness clutched the words in his throat:

"But I sall see ye again?"

"Of course," replied Jessie, "but I shall be very busy the next few days." (She did not say that Johnny Findlater was coming to stop with the Reverend Simon.) "After that, ony time, Jim, ony time. Good-bye!" She looked round.

"Where's my parasol?" Again Jim's face lighted up at the thought of doing something for her.

"Ye threw it awa' when the bull came after ye."

"Yes, I remember."

"I'll rin and get it for ye. I ken where it lies. Bide here a minute. I'll no be lang." At that moment both heard a sullen but modified bellow and looked over the low stone-wall into the field.

"What's that?" cried Jessie. "Why, the bull isna killed. He's walkin' about."

"That's sae," replied Jim, towering at her side.

"Aweel, I'm glad the puir beastie's nae deid. His neck's unco stiff though, I'm thinkin'."

Indeed the young bull was walking back stiffly and slowly towards the further end of the pasture, shaking his head unhappily from time to time, and, every now and then, disconsolately bellowing.

"I tocht him a lesson," continued our Giganticulus with a look of pride once more conquering the old humility.

"I tocht him a lesson sure. Noo, I'll rin and get your parasol."

But every word of Jim's that recalled the battle fanned the flame of hate in Jessie's mind. How she loathed the huge, hideous, uncouth, red-haired lout! Not for worlds would she have had him fetch that summer bauble; been under any further obligation to him (even were it such a light one as this).

"Jim," said she, "I canna let ye risk your life again. My parasol can lie there. I dinna want it."

"Let me?" said Jim.

"No."

"I maun get it."

"Never."

"Sure?"

"Quite sure, Jim."

"Verra weel, Jessie," said Jim in a disappointed voice, and like a slave the monstrous man yielded, though to do

some little service for her was all that he craved; like a slave heard her last words.

"I'd never take it. Risk your life, Jim, for a parasol. Absurd! And now once again, good-bye. An' — an', Jim, dinna speak o' this yet awhile. If — if my mither heard of it she'd be unco frichtened an' she's no weel the noo."

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For near half an hour Jim remained on the spot hallowed by Jessie's speech and presence, falling from the heights of bliss to the depths of despair as his mood shifted. In her was the ideal outside himself that counteracted everything unhappy, unkind, and ignoble in his own existence; in her was the saving clause. That much being sure, everything she did and said reflected on himself, as it bore relation to his wishes.

A. She had been wondrously thoughtful in not wishing him to fetch the parasol and risk his safety once more. (And this, without any comprehension of her motives, James magnified into a beautiful act of self-denial, for such is the way of lovers.)

B. She had been wondrously chilly in not allowing him to walk home with her and not settling another meeting.

Between these two ideas our James hovered, sometimes rising to the heights of beatitude with A, sometimes tumbling into the blackness of all nullity with B.

Then, as his desire was that facts should be kind to him and not unkind, his aching self fastened on A as the true thing, clung to it desperately and blindly, as a man clings to a tree above a precipice. Till the tree cracks and rends for the last time, he will continue to believe it sound. The gulf cannot be waiting for *him* of all people. So strong is his instinct of life.

A new force was hurrying our Giganticulus breathlessly to an unknown goal. The goal that waited for him he

wholly misconceived. What he thought he saw, wished to be, for sheer inability to imagine otherwise, was a dazzling end to all his unhappiness.

A little voice may have cried "Beware," but James heard it not or, if he heard it, turned a deaf ear.

He said to himself, over and over again, in a kind of ecstasy:

"I've saved Jessie's life."

For the first time saw good in that vast overpowering body of his, those knotted red hands, almost as big as shoulders-of-mutton, those mighty thighs and mighty loins, not yet grown to their full strength.

They had saved Jessie.

That they had also made her hate him, loathe him more than ever, behold our Giganticulus wholly ignorant!

Such was the irony of his position; such the Will of the Unresting, Unflinching Law, which makes, unmakes, and moves forward, weighing all things in the balance; rewarding and punishing in hidden ways, which are known to men perhaps later — and perhaps never. For everything It gives, It takes away, and for everything It takes away, It gives, and no man is master Thereof, but It is master of him. Dimly only can he descry Its workings, catch at faint showings, and feel sometimes the power of Mighty Hands, mightier even than the red, shoulder-of-mutton hands of James Macdonald.

At that moment our Giganticulus descried it not, but, clutching at proposition A, leapt once more over the low stone-wall, in which the bull was pastured, and found the red parasol lying uninjured in the grass. There was no molestation from the bull, not even a sullen bellow. He had had enough for the afternoon.

Dandling the red parasol in his arms — that remembrance of the black-eyed daughter of the McLures and all she meant to him — he took the downward path towards the

sinking sun. As well as Jessie, Jim had a tune and burden of his own, to which his feet kept time.

"Clump — clump — clump — clump! Man Jim, ye've saved her life."

Anon, too, his lips began to move in the fashioning of other words, and the travesty of an ancient song passed through them in a raucous hum.

"O that love and that love!
For she is ma darlin'.
Nae lass is in the world sae fair
As the lovely Jess Macfarlane."

Gone was the time when he might have joyously let loose on the mountain-tops his great bellowing voice. Gone was the season of aimless, cataclysmal bellowing. This hour was sacred, the hour of dreary silence, and fading sunset tints, and mysterious twilight making tender all the hot magic of that afternoon.

It was the hour of low melodies serene, deeper-toned beauty, and the Evening Star, and Jim's idea of melody was that raucous hum, in which he tried to express a gentle glamour born of the swiftly shifting tortures of his afternoon. For all moods are Love's. And so raucously humming "O that love and O that love —" he went down the hills, outlaw returning.

CHAPTER XXXV

HE pushed open the back door and crept silently into the scullery, wanting to be alone in his own room. Could he possibly get up the stair unobserved? It was a fact that now the rift between himself and his parents had so broadened that Jim came and went with hardly a word interchanged for days. Often, too, in remembrance of the old vow, and in order that Alexander might have nothing to say against him on the score of exaggerated gastronomical feats, he went without supper.

The door into the kitchen, where sat his father and mother, was ajar. Euphemia had evidently finished washing up the knives and plates.

"Where's Jim, I wonder," came his mother's querulous voice. Our Giganticulus was on the point of replying in case Euphemia might be anxious, when Alexander made grumbling answer.

"For Heaven's sake dinna fash ony mair about Jim. That's the twentieth time since supper ye've asked the same question. I misdoot the lad's been on some pliskies o' his ane. We havena had ony trouble wi' him lately but, forbye he's unco altered, we'll sune hae some mair. Aweel, I'm fatalistic aboot him the noo. There's nae smoke wi' oot a flame, ye ken. Why sud everyone speak ill o' him, forbye he's an ill lad? He hasna a frien' in the place and I'm thinkin' he desairves naethin' better. Mony years ago I feared it and noo I'm at the conclusion that Jim's nae guid ava'. If he does naethin' oot o' the ordinair fulish and wicked, I'm juist—thankfu'. That's a'."

Euphemia whimpered a little in answer. In her own

heart she accused Jim, but can anything ever make a mother forget that her son may not have enough to eat?

"The second evening rinning, Jim's had nae supper ava'," she cried.

"Huh!" snorted the quarryman and sucked loudly thrice at his pipe.

As for Jim, he reeled in the midst of his new-found happiness. For the moment, in the recollection of Jessie's glowing face and dark flashing eyes, he had forgotten all the dismal, lonely past — the sentence of outlawry. The future was to be all golden. The sun had shone in on the black dungeon of his melancholy and he had seen the window-bars were loosened. Alexander's words pierced him as with a knife.

"He hasna a friend in the place and I'm thinkin' he desairves naethin' better. If he does naethin' oot o' the ordinair fulish and wicked, I'm juist — thankfu'."

Ah! he would have one friend who would make up the loss, ten times, a hundred-fold, a thousand times. Nevermore would he do anything foolish and wicked.

The time for "pliskies" was past. No one knew that except Jim. It was his secret. He had saved her life. There was no Johnny Findlater to come between them now. The bad old times were gone.

At this thought, his new-found happiness whirled him up and along like an irresistible flood. His freckled face shone with a strange light; his huge red shoulder-of-mutton hands trembled; his great hobbledehoy body quivered from the tangled red hair to the enormous feet, quivered and became almost powerless. He leant against the scullery-wall for support. It groaned and shuddered under his weight.

"Wha's that?" cried Euphemia.

"It's me, mither. I was oot on the hills and didna ken the 'oor," he said, gathering himself together and pushing open the kitchen door.

"Huh!" snorted Alexander, looking at his son as if he would have liked to scold him. But Jim looked so gay and flushed that instead his father stared in surprise.

"An' what's the noo plisky?" he asked himself. This was not the glum Jim of every day.

"Ye maun hae some supper, Jim," said his mother. "Ye've no ta'en meat the last fower days. I'll mak' it ready."

It was true that he had not taken meat for four days, but, in spite of that, the Red Mist had come into his eyes and the feeling of superhuman strength into his body. If he took meat every day, what would be the result? Losh, to think of it. . . .

Jim went upstairs after a pretence of eating, not to sleep indeed, but to hug all night in his deepest self a rich secret. How many times, I wonder, did he say to this self, before dawn:

"I've saved Jessie's life."

The tumultuous passion which had shaken him on the hillside bore him along as a rushing river carries a log. Sometimes a sea is calm to all outward appearance. There are only tiny ripples on the shore, but in the air is audible a dull, as if far off, moaning. It comes from the depths of the sea, from the secret, mysterious, unknowable ocean. There is a change portending. Then the surface is altered and clouds cover the face of heaven. The blue of the sea turns to grey and the crests of the rising waves break in white. The dull booming grows nearer and louder. In the distance the dull grey has already changed to a black or a black-green and there the squall turns the horizon to an inky black. The wind moans eerily and has three or four times shouted with gusty passion. Still far off one sees the black squall approaching and the waters leaping and hissing in black-green foaming furrows beneath it. Then, almost before one realises, the near face of Nature

is changed. The sea leaps up to meet the heavens and the heavens descend to meet the sea. There is nothing but seething convulsion and confusion and a roaring that stuns and deafens.

So swiftly comes a storm. Or else — and old metaphors are cheap — loosen a boulder at the top of a precipice. It has lain there on the edge for many years, rooted and peaceful. Far below dives the gorge. The headlong sides of it are hung with twisted, clinging trees, fir, birch, and ash finding a precarious foothold, and at the bottom amidst thick wood a stream hurries and clamours. Loosen the stone! Before it gathers impetus, the strength of a child could stop it a few yards from the dizzy edge. But let it travel a little further, gathering force the whole time, and then not even the strength of the strongest man could avail to stay it. It leaps in the air like a thing of life, tears its way through the lesser shrubs that clothe the steep of the precipice, meets with a crack and crash the larger trees, and goes furiously on its way, leaving them bruised or broken behind it. So bounding and tearing and irresistible it is hurled down the gorge and finally plunges with a mountainous splash, a roar, and a boom far into the stream below.

Such is the headlong furious force of Passion when it is master.

For, when once a nature, secret and violent, like that of our Giganticulus has been driven in upon itself for many years, thwarted and compressed, it becomes dangerous as a highly compressed explosive. None of its power has been dissipated. It waits, harmless in appearance as a brick for the building of a house, this one of many bricks in the social edifice. But it is a brick of dynamite or some other ite that has been put amongst its utilitarian brethren by mistake. The first jolt, the first tap of the trowel, and everything in the neighbourhood will be

blown sky-high! Such a nature, because it cannot expand and diffuse itself, becomes deeper and deeper as it waits in solitude. The happy and content do not know passion, for it is the desire for something that can never be, and those who desire the impossible cannot, of course, be contented.

Passion is the torch of all those who look for an ideal outside themselves, whether seeking it in another person or a great deed.

Passion belongs to the very few. And they stand, dizzily poised between the peak and the gulf. Whether they shall climb to the peak or fall into the pit, who can tell?

The storm comes quickly. The log is borne rapidly in the swirling, yellow water. The stone is hurled down the mountain side.

But Passion is swifter than all these three things.

CHAPTER XXXVI

NOW the young bull that Jim overthrew in the saving of Jessie was a bull of unblemished pedigree and distinguished lineage, one of those animals that receive a great deal more care than many human beings. It had been imported, this young bull, to regenerate the stock of Farmer Thomson, and raise up in the Valley of Calder a noble and numerous progeny, horned, red-eyed, and small-hoofed.

Jim, it may be remembered, thought that he had broken its neck, but found, to his satisfaction, that the beast was able to walk, though stiffly, from the place in which it had been overthrown and stunned. Not scatheless, however, had the strong beast come out of that strange combat. All through the night it lay sullenly bellowing, unable to rise again after it had once hobbled off the field of action and lain down. It bellowed more fiercely and louder still the next morning, till the cowman climbed the hill-side, to see what was the matter.

He brought the news, agitated and distraught, to Farmer Thomson, who had been visiting, with his family, the day before.

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The bull's off-shoulder joint had been badly dislocated.

Mr. Farmer's rage and language were fully commensurate with the disaster.

He climbed, purple and panting, to the little stone-walled pasture.

The brute lay helpless on the ground. Made a scrambling effort to rise. Rolled its fierce eye, blew through its red nostrils. Bellowed!

'Twas all in vain. The Farmer had a gun in his hand. There was nothing left to do but use it. With his gun he slew the young bull. He was assuredly in a furious temper and a large sum out of pocket. The cowman was sacked on the spot, protesting vainly that he was in no wise to blame.

So ended the last chapter in the young pedigree bull's history. Like many other celebrated persons, however, it left the world in a complicated position at its death. First of all, as we have seen, the cowman lost his place, and secondly, a matter of much importance to the chief characters in our story, Farmer Thomson was determined to leave no stone unturned till the mystery of the accident was solved.

Young bulls do not dislocate their shoulder without a very good reason.

What was the reason?

The animal must have been worried, annoyed, irritated, goaded by some mischievous and evilly disposed persons or person, till it became infuriated and injured itself in a charge. There were marks in the grass of *big* feet. Rain had fallen heavily in the middle of the week and the ground, being soft, received a clear imprint. The Farmer examined the foot-marks. At a casual inspection they seemed big enough, but, when he looked close and compared them with his own, for the first time he realised how *enormous* they really were.

A distinct clue!

There could not be many in the neighbourhood with feet as big as that. In fact, they must be Jim Macdonald's prints! The mystery was solved!!

The cowman, interrogated before he left, denied that he had seen anyone the previous afternoon, but then his evidence was not worth much for he had been asleep in the barn at the particular moment when our Giganticulus and the deceased animal met in the wrestle; had heard nothing of the mingled shout and bellow which made all the Valley

of Calder a theatre of rumbling echoes. Decidedly Farmer Thomson must find more evidence before accusing Jim, that hulking ne'er-do-weel capable of any atrocity. So the measurements of the footprints in the field were carefully taken and preserved, and the next day he drove into Tuchan to discover whether anyone had by chance noticed Jim Macdonald in the neighbourhood of his pastures on Sunday afternoon.

Behold evidence accumulative and convincing — all the evidence his heart could desire! Jim had been seen coming home late on Sunday evening from that direction. Was it not moreover well known that the evilly minded youth was fond of lying about in the hills up there and occasionally popping out and terrifying children? So much so, in fact, that the young ones of the village were frightened to go along one particular path except in bands? Behold indeed evidence provocative of immediate action! At mid-day, however, Tuchan was wont to be a town of women (the Reverend Simon, the new dominie, and old Haggerty, by profession stone-breaker, being the only men in the place), and so such vengeance as the farmer desired was perforce delayed till evening when quarryman, fisherman, and the culprit himself would return. Meanwhile news that Jim Macdonald was again in trouble flew down the long thin winding street till it reached the manse and brought the Reverend Simon out.

"When Macdonald and his father come home from the Quarries to-night," said he, "we will go there and confront him with all this evidence, all this evidence of a very serious nature."

"Verra weel, Minister," replied the Farmer.

"I shall be verra glad of your assistance."

"Really this lad is going too far. I don't see how we can have him about the place any longer," said the Reverend Simon.

CHAPTER XXXVII

JIM MACDONALD was coming home from the Quarries alone as usual.

For two whole days and two whole nights he had been exalted, abased, shaken, tortured, filled with new loathing of himself, and then lifted high above the earth by the Passion of Ideal Love, that passion which is swifter in its coming than the log whirled in the yellow foaming torrent, the stone hurled down hill or the approach of a squall.

His only thought had been, when was he to see Jessie again?

Having looked into her eyes he beheld a new heaven and a new earth.

The touch of her hand made him quiver all over in a fierce yet blissful torture.

That huge unwieldy body was only an instrument on which Jessie could play the old bitter-sweet Legend of Spring.

There seemed to be a new light behind everything. Flowers, grass, sky, cloud, water, furrow, rain, rock, heather, and loch were all filled, as it were, with this strange new glow.

But how can one describe the inexpressible? The great thought of the world, flowers, grass, sky, cloud, water, furrow, rain, rock, heather, and loch transfused with the glowing thought of a lover's brain? Nature, the whole creation, the past and the future, all dwelling in one idea? Everything reduced to one symbol? The world as if on fire?

It is not possible.

Sadness and joy were so mingled that he did not know whether he was sad or joyful.

All his nerves quivered to the slightest scent or sound.

The distant and melancholy lowing of a cow brought tears to his eyes.

The smell of the heather made him choke down his sobs.

Was he happy, deliriously happy, or sadder than he had ever been before?

Jim could not tell and he cannot tell now. Neither night had he slept.

Queer pains shot through him, through all the nerves of his great, feverish body.

Since he had seen her, he coughed a short, dry cough.

All that day he had had a dull headache.

It was beginning to stab him now like a knife in his brain.

He flushed hot and turned icy cold without any apparent reason.

Had he thought of anything else, save Jessie McLure, he might have imagined that he was going to be ill.

As it was he lumbered down the road, pickaxe in hand and bag over shoulder, wondering when he was to see her again, see the girl who was to make up to him, ten times, a hundredfold, a thousand times, all that he had suffered hitherto, who was to open his dungeon with a golden key.

The sun sank.

Jim's huge figure looked vague, shadowy, and huger than ever in the dim twilight. The bad old times were gone.

There was no Johnny to come between them now.

He had saved Jessie's life and *she* knew that there was some good in him and his huge strength.

He lumbered on, dreaming in spite of the pain in his head.

In the opposite direction to the Giganticulus and along the same road (so that they must meet presently), were coming Jessie and Johnny. Dr. Spens had invited them to supper.

Jim dreams of Jessie, Jessie dreams of Johnny, Johnny thinks of his career.

Angel-faced blue-eyed Virtue is cold-blooded as Virtue is apt to be, and pays little attention to his companion's glowing face and flashing eyes. This evening the dark eyes flash more than ever.

But Johnny is working out a problem (as he would a problem in mathematics or geometry) to which there is no very clear answer, working it out with that clear, cold, not easily disturbed brain of his, with that unimpulsive, calculating cleverness. Ambition is the guiding principle of his life; a distinguished career undoubtedly awaits him; in his inmost self he cares about no one a quarter so much as Johnny Findlater. To walk the broad high-road was easy for one whom the sights, scents, and sounds of throbbing, palpitating Nature did not attract; to whom that dream, in which tender half-thought things flutter near, whispering that there is something beyond, something perhaps ungettable, was unknown. No — Johnny would never make a fool of himself for an idea. He would weigh the pros and cons and do the right thing. No enthusiast he! Hence was he sure to do the right thing — the right thing from the point of view of his success — and no one could deny that it was the right thing, or that he had behaved in any other way than he should.

Let us take off our caps politely to Johnny Findlater! He will be a great success, and we always take off our caps to success, no matter at what cost it is obtained.

Now, as always, Johnny will salute us with a bright and amiable smile. Amiability and brightness are great assets in the world. Lucky is the ambitious youth whose

countenance is well-favoured and whose manners are thoughtful and pleasant. No matter if his heart is as cold as a stone! None see our hearts except the doctors, who make a post-mortem, and, as for Johnny's, it will tick-tick, tick-tick, peaceably and regularly till he dies peaceably and regularly in his bed of pure old age. There will be no post-mortem on *him*. Therefore we are premature in dissecting him thus.

What is the problem on which this clear, cold, regular brain is engaged, as it smiles brightly and amiably at Jessie and listens to her with half an ear? That glowing face, those dark flashing eyes have thawed a little of the ice that surrounds angel-faced Virtue's heart, but the admirably regulated organ continues to beat in the same measured manner.

Yes, the ice did thaw a little and the blood run a trifle faster down the admirably managed arteries and channels of his body, but the clear, cold brain never suffered even a temporary obfuscation at the sight of Jessie's beauty.

As ever he thought methodically and carefully, and no one can say that he was not perfectly right to do so, altho' this problem, as perhaps you may have guessed, consisted in whether or not he should become engaged to Jessie. Was she not pretty enough for any man, passionately fond of him, and not entirely without means? But (and to Johnny it seemed a very large "but") could he tie himself to a girl at this early stage in his career? He was poor, would soon have to support his mother, had all his University years to go through, had not begun yet to make his way in the world. . . . If he had to travel far he must travel alone till the rough places in the journey were overpast.

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Yet Jessie was tempting. As, up to this moment he

had not determined on his course of action, he was just bright and amiable. He did not wish to compromise himself or the girl in any way. Johnny was always perfectly just. It was one of his great merits. Nothing ever blinded him.

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When they passed old Haggerty, the stone-breaker, chipping in the dusk, Johnny was not too much occupied to give him a bright and amiable smile. The old man responded, took a pinch of snuff, gazed after the young couple, and then laughed secretly to himself.

Old Haggerty chuckled long after they were out of sight.

The days of his youth came back and all the days of struggle and poverty and sorrow in between vanished in the retrospect. Old Haggerty remembered when —

So it is always with the old when they see young lovers. The old have come within sight of the waters of Lethe. That is why they have also begun to forget.

But Jessie McLure never even noticed him.

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"Oh!" she cried suddenly, catching Johnny's arm. "What is it?"

"What is what?" said Johnny, putting his problem on one side readily enough.

"That! Ower there! Coming towards us along the road."

She spoke hysterically, frantically enough, overstrung first by her late adventure and now nearly distraught by the crisis of her youthful love. Indeed, Jim Macdonald, looming vague and enormous round a bend in the road, with pickaxe in hand and bag over shoulder, had not (for an instant) been recognised. Then came the awful certainty. "It was he. The huge Horror. The Half-Beast." She could have cut out her tongue, sunk under the earth. How could the secret of her recent rescue be

kept any longer now? How with the hideous monster at hand? Suddenly instinct, hatred flashed a view, a counsel. Would not her surprise be wholly in favour of concealment? Would not her failure to recognise him be great evidence that she had not seen him up to this moment? Ah! who can say whether at that time she meant to conceal altogether the fact that Jim had saved her life or only to hide it for a while—till Johnny had gone away—till, till she was more able herself to endure all that such a disclosure would involve? Who can say? Yet, in those few moments, she resolved how to act as Johnny stared at the approaching monster without answering.

"I'm sure I don't know," he answered at last in a state of vague astonishment. "As far as I can make it out it seems to be a kind of giant."

"Oh! nonsense," she replied, playing a part easily now that her cue had once been given her. "There canna be giants nowadays, so dinna be ridiculous. Yet it's a verra big man. It startled me at first. I couldna think what it was."

"I'm not so sure," replied Johnny in his almost English tones, "if it isn't a giant, it's something very like it. Why the man must be nearly seven feet high."

"The effect of the dusk," replied Jessie easily, "magnifying everything or altering proportions."

Angel-faced Virtue shook his head.

"It's the biggest man I've ever seen," he replied. In the meanwhile the protagonists of this story were drawing closer and closer together, and Jim as he approached nearer and nearer seemed to the wondering Johnny and the loathing Jessie like one towering to positively incredible heights. He came along as he thought swiftly but in reality slowly. He came along humming that raucous version of an antique song, which ran with broken words over and over again:

“Oh! that love and oh! that love,
For she is my darlin’,
Nae lass is in the world so fair
As the lovely Jess McFarlane.”

He came along and the few stars which now peeped out in the sky shot across the heavens in misty parabola as they do on a long exposed negative. Rather did he seem to be whirled than carried on his own huge feet, and yet a kind of weight clogged him to the earth. He was strangely light-headed, and gay at last, for life had turned the bad corner of the road. So, with eyes unnaturally bright and cheeks high flushed, he hummed, moving all the while in the scenes of a day or two ago. Once more Jessie showed the leg in the pretty red stocking as she ran; once more he felt her warm young body in his arms, as he flung her forward and waited the onset of the bull (*Giganticulus ferox* v. *Taurus intractabilis*). Oh — the snort, the bellow, the hot, streaming, fragrant breath, and the huge weight that would have sent an ordinary man backwards to destruction but left *him* standing, victor and unshaken! Did he not hear again Jessie's voice, feel again the touch of her hand upon his knee?

Has there ever lived a man who could give expression to all the bliss that such memories recall? How many poets, how many writers have tried, and yet all their efforts are but a pale reflection of the real thing. One can only give an idea, only hints, shadows, adumbrations, comparisons, similes, and metaphors. Memory, even, cannot wholly recall. How hard is it therefore to give utterance to feelings which, in themselves, are “portions and parcels of the dreadful past”! The reign of the senses is riotous, tyrannous, and brief like all tyrannies, and, when men walk abroad once more with unbowed head and cheek no longer hollowed and pale, with footsteps again firmly planted on the earth, as if it in some measure

belonged to them, when horrid anticipations no longer crowd the opening and the closing day, when voices are not hushed in the market-place, and tongues can wag by the hearth, what seem the old times? Can any really and truly recall their sensations, when the ruthless, cruel, insatiable tyrant sat upon the throne, crowned in his golden crown and robed in his royal robes? It is as if they looked back from a light summer morning—a morning when the honeysuckle pushes its delicate tinted trumpets into a night passed amidst evil dreams, into the sleeper's room, filling his nostrils with everything pure and sweet, and the birds sing and the blackbirds whistle, and all the fair awakening is unmarred by the sounds of men. Who can say what the fierce, gloomy, black, hideous phantoms of the night have been, the shades with whom he has wrestled and under whose might he has fallen? The sound of their whisperings and mutterings is still in his ears, but what their import was he remembers not. He has striven, but with what and with whom he hardly remembers. They were just Phantoms of the Night.

And yet, when the tyrant was on his throne—INSTANS TYRANNUS—life went on somehow. The oxen crowned with garlands went to the sacrificial altars; the maidens followed and the youths blowing on trumpets; and the priests prayed to the gods. Men and women were given in marriage, and children born, and the eye worshipped beauty.

Yes—life went on just as usual but as though overhung by some fearful pall, and so, perhaps because of the contrast of uncertainty and terror, because the sorrows and the griefs and the confusions were greater and keener, the joys and all the sensations were greater and keener too.

But now men look back from a calmer and more settled time when, as far as is possible in our strange world, one day will follow another, as like as one priest's cloak is to

his fellow's, and the next moment can be reckoned on, and the clock's tick sounds no longer solemn and ponderous as a judge's doom. Now jubilate, jubilate!

The Tyrant is deposed. No longer are the streets alive with spies; no longer are the courts rotten with false testimony. No longer do Secret Fear, Hatred, Malice, and Uncharitableness sit as lords of the land's tribunals, and one man can look another in the face without fear or favour. So who can describe that already half-forgotten and fierce medley, when suspicion grew like weeds among the tombs, and hatreds hissed like snakes under the stones, and the dreadful tyrant sat on his throne — INSTANS TYRANNUS?

CHAPTER XXXVIII

"**P**HENOMENAL — incredible — Polyphemus — Gargantua — Blunderbore — Goliath!" exclaimed Johnny, as memories of famous monsters of old time leapt into his mind at the near sight of Jim.

"Oh!" cried Jessie. "Come on! Dinna let's stare at him. I believe he's — drunk. Hark! he's singing to himself."

Did she or did she not believe that Jim Macdonald was intoxicated? Everyone spoke ill of him. It might very well be the case. Sober individuals do not sing to themselves as they walk by the wayside or at any rate in the raucous hum, in which neither words or tune were distinguishable, affected by him. Did she or did she not believe that the uncouth fellow had been grossly tippling? One thing, at least, was certain, it was all to get Johnny past without words.

"Drunk!" said Johnny, and Jim, now about twenty yards off, lurched as he spoke. "Then we won't speak to him."

"Hurry past without looking," whispered Jessie quickly.

He stared at her. He had not thought her so timid.

"It is one of the quarrymen I suppose. What a huge fellow! He must, indeed, be nearly seven feet high."

"Johnny — please — please dinna stare at him sae," whispered Jessie once more tremulously. "Whatever should we do if he attacked us?"

What chance was there of getting past without words? A faint one, a very faint one if Johnny never recognised him. But if he did and they spoke together . . . truly she might fear for the result. Had she told Jim of the Rev. Simon's other visitor? It was many years since Angel-

faced Virtue and Uncouth Wickedness met in the School-yard. Many, many years. But was the case altered? There are some things which even Time cannot obliterate, and were not the probabilities that Jim Macdonald was drunk, without the capacity for self-control?

"He's not a man-eating giant, I hope," said Johnny with mock gravity. "Pooh! Jessie, the fellow won't hurt us. What's the matter with you this evening?"

"Perhaps I am verra absurdly nairvous," she replied with an attempt at a laugh, "but the weather has been sae hot this week. I'm sure there's thunder in the air."

"A rain-storm would do a world of good," he said and, at that moment, flung a swift upward look at the passerby. One view of the red and freckled face and the red hair was enough. In his surprise he cried aloud, "Jim Macdonald!"

Jessie gasped and turned white as a sheet. The meeting had come then.

In a kind of agony she turned away and did not see every emotion in the world pass across Jim's face. Surprise, anger, fear, love, jealousy, mortal sickness, hatred, envy, sorrow. Dreaming of nothing but Jessie, he had not dreamt that she was so near. Dreaming of Jessie, he had not dreamt of seeing Johnny too. Dreaming of devotion rewarded, he awoke to find it betrayed.

So, "Johnny—an'—an' Jessie," he said slowly and his huge bulk seemed to quiver.

Johnny, having no passions of his own, was not very observant of other people's. It was dusk and he could only indistinctly see the face of the colossus, who towered above him. Still even he noticed the distortion of the round, red face and the changes of the undecided, childish features. Jim lurched again and swayed slightly to and fro as he stood looking down on Johnny. He put his hand to his forehead and stared confusedly from one to the other. His eyes were unnaturally bright: skin damp with

sweat: face scarlet and the next instant pale. "He is drunk," thought Johnny and repented bitterly of not having restrained the cry that attracted Jim's attention. "How are we to pass him without unpleasantness? How are we to get on now?"

He decided swiftly with his clear, cold brain, which always took the way from a difficulty without confusion, that the ordinary and obvious civilities were the proper course. Jim might not be too drunk to reply reasonably and let them pass on quietly in a few moments. In the old days his delight in tormenting had chiefly come from a love of power, of having something at his mercy, from a feeling of contempt, which utterly excluded pity for everything helpless, useless, and unsuccessful. To him battling with the world in his own fashion was a real delight. He rejoiced in overthrowing difficulties, in out-distancing his competitors, in the pure and naked glory of his "I" advancing.

No riddles, no doubts, no distractions, no hesitations, no self-tortures existed for him. No sentimental tuggings pulled him this way and that. He was always incapable of putting himself in another's place and yet, as he never asked for anything but took it quietly and firmly by his own exertions, no one expected him to be put for an instant in their own places but simply watched his progress, "marvellously admired."

With his hand now on greater powers, he had nearly lost all memory of the old days when he tormented Jim Macdonald, and had certainly lost all motive to torment any longer one who was not, at this hour, in the slightest degree, in Johnny's way.

So, "Hulloa, Jim," said Johnny with his bright and amiable smile. "I never saw it was you coming down the road. You've hardly altered a bit though."

Jim attempted an answer. Of what it consisted I do

not know and never shall. The words stuck in his throat, which in the last quarter of an hour had become horribly hot and swelled.

Nothing came from his lips, dry and harsh, but a gurgle.

A hoarse, menacing gurgle that was almost a growl.

Jim could think still. Think with a precision and clearness most unusual to him.

And one sentence went perpetually through his brain as he stood there rocking and silent like some man-elephant.

"Jessie had betrayed him. She had never told him that Johnny would be there."

Whose was the blame?

Jim had got it fixed into his head beneath a mass of tangled red hair — a head never accustomed to reason like Johnny's, a head that could not contain more than one idea at a time, a head swift moving but slow thinking (if one can apply such adjectives to any head), a head that battered itself with magnificent folly against stone-walls, a child's head, a head whose development had lagged behind the development of the body — that Jessie McLure was come to Tuchar for the purpose of abolishing all these miseries that had hitherto been netted round him.

"It is so pleasant seeing old friends again," went on Johnny, smiling still.

No one would have guessed the pleasure that must undoubtedly be Jim's from looking at his sullen, flushed face.

"Last time we met," Johnny laughed outright, and the sound had an amiable ring in it, "I seem to remember we had a bit of a quarrel. You broke my head with a stone, Jim. Have you forgotten?"

The passing years, with all their successes, had taken all bitterness of recollection from the mind of angel-faced Virtue. Only into sullen Wickedness' memory that last of his school-days suddenly leapt back, as vivid and dramatic as if Johnny were once more lying on the ground

with the Dominie bending over him. During those years in which Johnny had visited other places and made other friends (he who always made friends easily), Jim, as we know, had never stirred from Tuchan. Every stone in the village, every clump of heather by the roadside had assimilated itself into him. Though his body had expanded, his mind had not followed suit. Half-defiant and half-brooding, the Giganticulus awaited, in the place where he had grown, the fate that was to bring them all together again. His intelligence was hardly more than a dog's compared with his old enemy's practised brain. Forgotten the day when Johnny's head was broken?

That would never be forgotten.

His old hatred surged irresistibly through him even as his old love had done.

Such love and such hatred can only exist where the mind has not dissipated itself on multifarious objects, but remained aloof and alone like a monk in his naked cell.

"We never shook hands afterwards. Let's shake hands now, Jim. I'm very glad to see you again."

The Giganticulus never had much capacity for action and any words he might wish to say were strangled in his throat. He would rather have fought twenty-five bulls than shaken hands with Johnny, but almost before he knew what he was doing, he took the fingers proffered in his own huge palm.

"Jim," quoth Johnny, "the old quarrel is patched up. We can be friends again."

It was said with an easy, confident air and a look of satisfaction on the pink and white, regular featured face, which confounded the hulking slave in front of him.

How that fellow longed to raise shoulder-of-mutton fist and dash it into the simpering countenance of rectitude, but, with the few glimmerings of sense that were his, knew that the cause would hardly gain thereby.

His great hand fell limply.

Hitherto Jessie had remained silent with face somewhat averted. Now she had no doubt from his lurches and growls that her guess as to his condition had been correct. Had not the conversation lasted long enough? She said in a low voice:

"Come awa, Johnny. We must not keep the Doctor waitin'."

Drunk as he was, might not Jim blurt out at any moment the story of the bull, and oh! the more she saw of him, the more odious it seemed that she should owe her life to this half-animal, half-witted, wholly repulsive creature, lurching, growling, in an aphasia of tipsiness.

"Good-bye, Jim! We shall meet again."

"Good-bye, Jim," echoed Jessie, but the farewell stuck in her throat. She could hardly speak to him. Hardly knowing herself whether her words were audible she forced them out; choked; swallowed; and then said in a tone which was meant for Johnny's ear:

"How disgustingly drunk he is!"

As she spoke the obstruction in her throat seemed to vanish, and the exclamation, forced through her larynx, easily carried the ten paces to where Jim stood looking after them, with shoulders bowed and hang-dog oafish face.

He staggered as Jessie's words reached him, lurched, and just saved himself from falling, clawing at the air with his huge shoulder-of-mutton hands. A hoarse cry burst from him.

"Jessie!"

The girl turned half-back, saw him staggering and swaying, and, with a shriek, whipped round and ran up the road.

After a glance at Jim, Johnny followed her.

The Giganticulus remained alone.

CHAPTER XXXIX

IN that brief five minutes he had been snatched from a glimpse of heaven and plunged into the abyss of hell.

Whether or not the heaven and hell were of his own making is a metaphysical question and one hardly germane to this history.

The fact remains that, if Jim had been living in purgatory up to that moment, after it he was plunged in hell, deep and deep and deep. What is hell?

Since mankind invented a heaven to reward those who are heavy-laden, many hells have been also invented for the punishment of the wicked. First of all there was the classical hell where Pluto the dark-browed, golden-front-leted King reigned with his pale Queen over regions of gloom; where torture-racked spirits were plunged in rivers of fire and ceaselessly cursed, groaned, and shrieked; where those who had offended the gods while on earth must always perform impossible tasks — Tantalus, Sisyphus, the daughters of Danaus.

Thus Jim, at the moment when Jessie and Johnny left him standing in the road, suffered, in himself, misery out of which an imaginative theologian could have constructed a very passable place of torment.

It is immaterial whether such an one had a leaning towards physical or spiritual rackings, the Giganticulus could have given him plenty of raw material for his experiments in either direction.

A red-hot iron stabbed him through either temple. Swift and agonising pains shot through all his limbs. He was so weak that he could hardly stand. A wheel turned

ceaselessly inside his brain. His feet were made of lead, his hands of lumps of ice. Occasionally it seemed as if these leaden feet flowed away from him, molten, and as if the ice of his hands joined the stream. He was conscious of nothing but a huge, heavy head, which his neck hardly supported. It was as if a cannon-ball was balanced on a stalk. The cannon-ball nodded hazardously. The stalk must soon snap.

He felt an overwhelming desire to lie down by the roadside. His strength was utterly vanished. Nothing remained but the last weakness.

So much for the physical torture.

As for that of his mind, we discriminate as a matter of convenience and convention, how can one describe that for which language must always be inadequate? The most poignant words in our tongue are the shortest. They are swiftly spoken — love, hate, God, right, wrong, vice, might, moan, shriek, great, small, the list might be prolonged over two or three pages, — they come straight, they hit in a breath. There is nothing glittering, gorgeous, or solemn about the march of their syllables. They lack the tramp of onomatopœia.

Yet, though they are the shortest, they imply the most. They wear no "vesture very glorious." They are stern and naked symbols, truthful in their nakedness, and the naked stirs the imagination as the artificial never can.

Therefore, when we write that Jim was sad, we write the truth in one of these stern and naked monosyllables. By this simple sentence we stir the imagination of all who have suffered and through suffering have learnt pity, the purest and loveliest emotion that men can feel.

Not the delicatest artifice of word or the most perfect web of sentences could, in reality, say half of what this simple monosyllable says, for, wherever a thing is attempted, it must partly fail, and whatever is expressed

takes away, therefore, by the very fact of expression. O cruel and inexorable Law!

In all things it holds good.

For that which a man has, and having is only a form of expression, becomes in a moment less beautiful. Can anything be more tragic?

Jim did not know this but only felt the indirect force of the Law, as he stood there with his vast figure vague in the gloaming and afterwards almost merged in the dark. For directly Jessie ran down the road, he knew immediately that she was more desirable and more beautiful than he had ever before imagined.

Her voice sang in his ears, lent a kind of ruthless music even to the unjust sentence pronounced upon him.

"How disgustingly drunk he is!"

For close upon an hour (for he had left the Quarries last, and no others used the road habitually save the quarrymen), he stood upon that lonely way desolate, undisturbed, and thinking over the unjust accusation.

The words, uttered by Jessie, were as if burnt into his brain. In his folly he had imagined hearing many words from her lips (did not the girls and boys of Tuchan wander that season in couples?) but assuredly and in very truth, never in his most fathomless moods of despondency, words like these.

Even then, after the agony of an hour, while the black hauntings circled in his brain just as the bats round his motionless-hung head, he began to make excuse for her; even then, would not admit, wholly and unconditionally, what, once admitted, would crush him to the ground. The light had gone out of rock, hill, cloud, moor, loch, furrow, water, and grass.

A light had gone out of himself.

Out of the whole world perhaps.

The very thought that such a thing could be said made it darker.

Yet many a cruel thing is done in ignorance. Jessie McLure did not know.

Even a kind of pity mingled itself in his feelings towards her, pity the purest and loveliest emotion that even a Giganticulus can know.

Pity, because she did not know and would have hated herself if she had known, bade him forgive her. And then (so mounted the scale in her favour and Jim loved well because he could hate) thought he, a few moments after, Jessie must have reason on her side. "There must be something about me to make her think I was drunk."

At the thought the whole night swam dizzily round him and the stars shot across the heaven in misty parabola once more.

A glimmering of common sense came to him in his confusion of sorrow, despised affection, and ancient hatred revived. "I'm no drunken," he said to himself, "but I'm sick."

Then remembered he how for a week past he had felt mysterious weaknesses and achings. In the last two days these had culminated. Had it not been for the idea of seeing Jessie again, he must have given in before. This hope, with the knowledge that his abnormal size had at last helped him and that she recognised some service in it, sustained him. Even now, perhaps, he might have held out had not Jessie spoken the unjust accusation. But it had been spoken and he must prove to her that it was really illness that made him so weak and unsteady. *Must* prove it to her. There was no good in fighting any longer. Home then. Dr. Spens would come to see him. Good Dr. Spens, who always tried to be kind, could cure him. Jessie would not be unkind to him if she knew he had been ill. Really ill. No. As soon as her mother was strong enough to hear of the peril thro' which she had run, she would tell the story and make all go fair. She had been right to feel disgusted

with him even tho' he had saved her life. He must not ask too much. Great had been his fortune in being able to do a great thing. Johnny was there . . . but had he saved her life?

"Och! how ma heid aches!" mumbled Jim, putting one huge shoulder-of-mutton hand to his aching forehead, and, as if she could hear it, "Jessie, ma heid's dreadfu' bad but no wi' the drink, lass."

All these ideas went through his mind, not in any clear and perspicuous train of thought; rather by a series of hardly mated, blurred impressions. But now, staggering, lurching, and swaying, he passes home through the dark.

CHAPTER XL

AS he neared the Macdonald cottage, he heard the sound of voices and turned in, as noiselessly as he could, by the back way.

His strength had just lasted long enough to take him home and then, for a breathing-space, he leant up against the scullery-wall, even as he did three nights ago, when a fit of weakness had seized him. The door of the kitchen was closed this time but through it came a babel. To him, dizzy, aching, and trembling, it seemed as if the room must be full of people.

Even in his miserable condition he wondered what was happening.

Above all he heard a loud and querulous wail. It was the wail of Euphemia undoubtedly. Had there been some disaster? Had one of his brothers or sisters died suddenly? All sorts of wild ideas waved through his brain already fevered by sickness. He put one hand against the wall to steady himself. For the moment his own troubles were forgotten. Then he heard the voice of Alexander raised in a gust of wrath.

"I kenned fine that nicht there was some noo plisky! Didna I tell ye sae, Phemie?"

His mother sobbed loudly in answer.

Then a loud, rich, dominant voice, easily recognisable as the Reverend Simon's, rang in Jim's ear, as if the intervening door had been of paper, not wood.

"Mr. Thomson found his footprints all over the field, at least footprints so large that they could belong to no one in the village except him, and Mrs. Macintosh saw him

coming from that direction the same evening. So I greatly fear, Macdonald, that the accusation is well founded. I wonder why he is not home yet." Jim remained with mouth agape and hand spread against the wall. In his surprise all his sensations of illness disappeared. It gradually penetrated to him that none other but himself could be the topic of conversation. Yet what was the precise cause of the Reverend Simon's presence in the cottage he could not guess.

"Mr. Macdonald," joined in another voice, which Jim did not know, a voice which sounded as if its owner was striving to suppress some strong emotion, "Mr. Macdonald, that bull was called the 'Pride of Ayrshire' and cost me a hundred pound. I found him wi' his shoulder sae badly dislocated that I was forced tae shoot him. D'ye ca' it fair that a mon sad lose sic a sum o' money because o' the ploys o' an idle rascal?"

"Mon alive," roared Alexander. "Ye've tauld me sae a score o' times. D'ye think that I enjoy —"

Before he could finish the sentence the door between the scullery and the kitchen was thrown violently open and the enormous figure of Jim was framed in the doorway.

"I didna mean to hurt him," he said and swayed slightly as he spoke.

The Reverend Simon, Farmer Thomson, Alexander, and Euphemia jumped one and all at the suddenness of his entry and then stared at him in dumb surprise. Though they had been waiting the best part of an hour for him to return from the Quarries, they had not expected him at that exact moment. The first that recovered his presence of mind was the Reverend Simon.

"Convicted out of his own mouth," he cried and there was an ill-concealed ring of triumph in his tones.

"This is a serious matter, my lad, the kind of thing for which men go to prison."

"Och! Jim, Jim!" wailed Euphemia.

"Sae ye've come hame at last," muttered Alexander, glowering.

And "'Twas ye that did it, then. I was richt," said Farmer Thomson, as, red in the face with anger, he chewed his thumb, a nutty-brown stump.

"Well, now that you've confessed, and a very good thing for you," went on the Reverend Simon, "you had better make a clean breast of the whole business. We know more than you think, and so do not attempt, in any way, to palliate your conduct by falsehood, conduct which I may say (grandly his voice rolled out the periods) is utterly despicable, treacherous, and malicious. It seems, Jim Macdonald, that you are not content with terrifying and bullying little children, you must torture poor dumb animals too. Now, out with the whole story!"

Jim was about to tell it, when suddenly he thought, "Ma pledge to Jessie!" Remember that with his sickness coming fast upon him and after the hour of agony, through which he had passed, his mind was not very clear and moreover he had not at any time Johnny Findlater's cold, alert brain to see, at once, the way out of a difficulty. His promise held on the tip of his tongue any explanation.

"Out with it, I say! Out with everything," trumpeted the Reverend Simon in his most dictatorial tones, seeing the Giganticulus pause. "No subterfuge! no shilly-shallying!"

Jim still stumbled in the labyrinth of his hazy ideas of chivalry. He must not cause any injury to the health of Jessie's mother. He must, till he could get back his word, conceal a part of the story. It never occurred to him that they would not believe.

"I'm verra fashed that the bull's deid," he began slowly.

"That's easy eneuch tae say," grumbled Mr. Thomson. "You won't get off your punishment in that way," pom-

pously and yet grimly interjected the Reverend Simon. Euphemia wailed again.

"I never meant tae hurt him."

Farmer Thomson bit his thumb more impatiently than ever and shuffled his feet, while the Reverend Simon was just going to open his mouth, when Jim, holding up his hand with a new and strange sense of dignity, said:

"I threw him ower to save anither body."

Everyone looked at him in a blank amazement.

"Explain yourself further," said Mr. McManus.

"I threw him doon in the field because he was chasing anither body," answered the Giganticulus.

Mr. Thomson gave an impatient stamp and snorted like one of his own cattle. Euphemia stopped sobbing for an instant and stared; while Alexander, whose temper was becoming more and more testy, cried:

"For the sake o' Heaven, Jim, dinna waste the time of everyone here by talking nonsense. It's bad aneuch a'ready."

"What A'm tellin' ye is the truth," replied Jim, "Fairmer Thamson's young bull was chasin' the pairson I ken and there wasna anither way forbye rollin' him ower."

"Pooh! What a story!" said Mr. McManus disdainfully. "Who was the 'person' I should like to know, and how in the world could —?" His rich, dominant voice suddenly died away as he realised the marvellous nature of Jim's statement. "How in the world could —?" he said again and stopped, but not for long. Cried then, "You lying rascal, and a rascal are you indeed if you force a minister of the Gospel to say such words, how in the world could you throw a bull over?"

"The story's a lee from beginning to end," said Farmer Thomson. "Wull he spin sic a yairn before the magistrates I'm askin'?"

As throughout the interview Euphemia wailed.

"I'm sick o' the lad," cried Alexander and kicked violently against a chair.

"How did I throw him ower?" answered Jim. "A juist slipped aside as he passed and caught hauld of him and, at first, I thocht I had broken his neck."

He made as if he would illustrate his words by action but, as he moved, another pain stabbed him through shoulders and head and the whole room whirled round him. He nearly fell. To steady himself he clutched at the circumambient air with his two shoulder-of-mutton hands. One of them just missed the Reverend Simon's right eye.

"Good Gracious! Do be careful!" cried that worthy as he dodged backwards with his head.

"Whatever's the matter wi' ye, Jim?" moaned Euphemia, taking her first part in the conversation. The capacity for concentrating his thoughts vanished from the Giganticulus. Not only was the room whirling round him but also past, present, and future. Euphemia, Alexander, the Reverend Simon, Farmer Thomson circled above him like elderly and ungraceful fairies. Their voices seemed to come from mid-air. He stared stupidly and almost uncomprehendingly at this amazing aerial quartet.

"I'm sure I dinna ken," he replied as Euphemia floated wailing past the tip of his nose. "I think I'm sick."

"Och!" cried Euphemia on her return journey and clutched him in her flight. One coarse-skinned, dried-up hand held his. How deliciously cool it felt! Jim thought to himself and then said out loud, for this if anything would prove his case:

"Ye winna believe how strong I be and noo here's the proof. Dinna ye see that A'm hauling up ma mither wi' ane haund richt in the air an' yet ye a' think that wi' twa haunds an' a' ma strength I cud'na throw ower the bull. Luk ance mair. I can hauld her wi' ane finger."

He disengaged three and a thumb from tiny Euphemia's grasp, and a triumphant look overspread his face.

She wailed louder than ever. Her mother's heart was rent. She was weeping for her child.

"O! Jim, laddie. What is it wi' ye? What is it wi' ye?"

"Luk, luk, Meenister!" cried Jim with a fatuous glare of triumph on his face.

"Pshaw!" (or words to that effect) cried the Reverend Simon violently while black furrows knitted themselves on his white forehead. "Pshaw! We cannot stay here to be trifled with. Trifled with, did I say? I mean insulted. The rascal's laughing at us. He's playing the fool and the knave at the same time, Mrs. Macdonald. I refuse to be put off in this way. We must have the truth. He admits to having injured the bull, and neither Mr. Thomson or myself can consent to go away before the circumstances are clear in every particular."

Thus spoke Mr. McManus in a fury as he dimly realised that once more the destiny of Jim would be torn from his grasp.

"It's a cock-and-bull story," he cried, losing all self-control. "He's laughing at all of us. He's no more sick than I am. He shall go to gaol." Farmer Thomson supported the Minister with less personal bias but a considerable temper.

"The bull was ca'd the 'Pride of Ayrshire' and cost me a hundred poond," he said for about the tenth time. "Dinna lee ony mair but say hoo ye injured it!"

These voices still seemed to Jim the voices of an aerial troupe. He giggled feebly and hit at the last speaker as he swung past.

"Ye fulish auld mon," cried Jim, "if ye stop on the flur I'll talk to ye but if ye gae on fleein' through the air, I'll no speak ony mair. It makes ma heid ache."

"Bend doon, Jim, bend doon!" whispered Euphemia low and heedless of the two who would hurt her son, "bend doon an' let your mither feel your foreheid." As a tower leans ere it falls, so bent Jim in answer to his mother's command. The cool rough fingers touched below the forelock of his tangled red hair.

"Meenister!" cried Euphemia, suddenly defiant. "It's blazin' hot."

Alexander was about to kick a chair, but his wife's eye caught his and he remained motionless, attentive.

"Mrs. Macdonald," said the Reverend Simon in a last attempt, with clenched hands and fury flashing from his eyes, "this is not the first time that you've helped this miserable boy to escape the punishment which he deserves, and now, I put it plainly, you must decide once and for all between him and me. I pardoned insolence in him years ago, yes, and last year, and this year when it was only towards my person, Heaven knows whether I was right to do that, but this deliberate and wanton injury done to Mr. Thomson is not within the category of things my duty as a Christian allows me to pass over. The boy is ill, you say. He was not ill when he hurt the bull. Therefore he must be punished at the proper season. I leave you now, but let me emphasise the fact once more that this time you must choose between him and me."

Euphemia drew herself up to the full stature of five feet two and a half inches with all the pride of maternity.

"There's time eneuch when the lad is weel again," she began, when suddenly Jim's voice interrupted her. The four people in the room had discontinued their dizzy gyrations and now stood on the floor like himself, but in the last few minutes they had grown smaller and smaller, while their voices tinged faintly in his drumming ears from the far, far distance. He, himself, seemed to be growing, growing in all the parts of his already great body. He was

swelling so hugely that before the end came and he burst, he must speak — speak to the little red dot and the little white dot that he knew to be, respectively, the faces of Farmer Thomson and the Reverend Simon. Therefore, snapping the little tinging that was in his ears and reminded him somehow of his mother's voice, by his own solemn and grave words, he spoke to the listening earth, to sky, cloud, rock, heather, hill, furrow and loch. For now (so quickly and vainly shifted the changing fancies of his delirium) by the darkness that surrounded him he knew he must be on some great moor. That little white dot or that little red dot were the lights of lonely houses or perhaps the lights of stars; the faint tinging, which the sound of his voice had broken, was the wind.

The lights grew dimmer and dimmer and thus to the darkness he spoke:

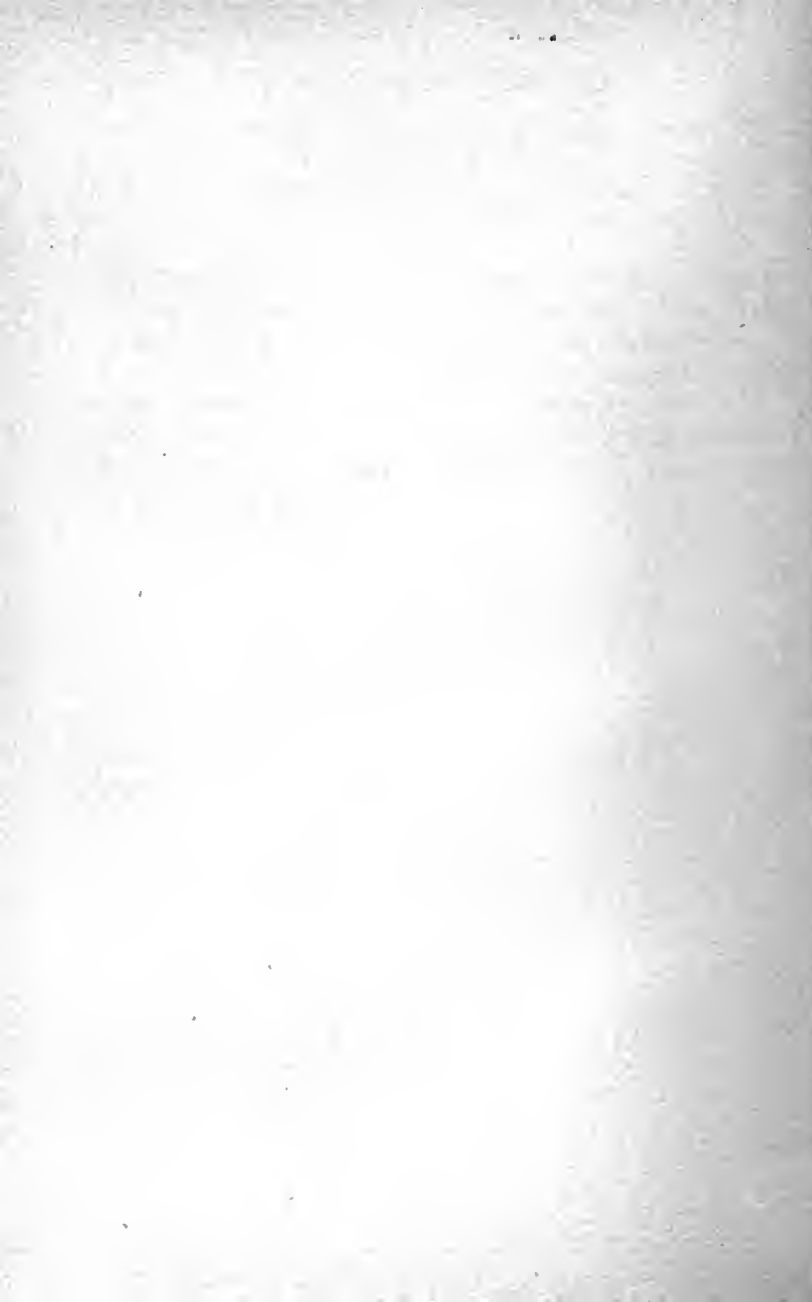
"I threw her ahint me. I promised no to say her name an' I winna — and then I waited for the bull and threw him ower as he passed. I thocht I'd broken his neck. He lay sae still. Then I picked her up — I winna tell her name — and carried her to the burn by the birches and sprinkled her bonny face wi' water. I hadna seen her for five years but my! she was bonny. An' she lay still. I thocht at first I'd broken her neck. Then she opened her ee'n an' my! she loked bonny. I knew it was her I'd been waitin' for all them five years. She wasna hurt but I promised nae to tell her name in case her mither might be frichtened. If I hadna thrown down the bull, she wad hae been kilt. But she wasna hurt ava'. But if her mither knew, she wad be frichtened. Sae I winna tell the lassie's name but my! she loked bonny. If she was here — I'll no tell her real name but ca' her Jess McFarlane (winking cunningly), —

“Oh! that love and oh! that love
For she is ma’ darlin’.
There isna lass i’ the world sae fair
As the lovely Jess McFarlane.”

(Humming his old discordant travesty of an air.) “Yes—
if Jess McFarlane was here,” he continued, “she’d tell
ye the varra same thing as me. But she canna speak o’t
because it wad frichten her mither. Canna speak o’t. No.
First I thocht her neck was broken. She lay sae still.”

Having thus spoken to the surrounding darkness, which
interrupted him not, even as a tree falls, fell James Mac-
donald on the kitchen floor.

PART IV



CHAPTER XLI

HE recovered consciousness a week later to find the kindly face of Dr. Spens looking into his own.

Euphemia was also in the room. She seemed inexpressibly delighted.

"Ah ha!" said the Doctor in a pleasant cheery voice. "Now we shall do well, if we take care. Now we shall do quite well."

"O! thanks be to the Lord," cried Euphemia.

"Whateffer is the matter? Why am I in bed?" asked James Macdonald in a voice so weak that it surprised him.

"Laddie, ye've been sair sick indeet," replied his mother, "but the guid Doctor says ye'll sune be well noo."

"Sick?" asked the Giganticulus.

"A touch of pneumonia, Jim," replied Dr. Spens. "Neither a slight attack nor a very bad attack, but yet one to make your mother very anxious."

"I remember naethin' aboot it."

"Because, my dear Jim, you've been unconscious for a week."

"A hale week ye've lain there tossin' frae side tae side o' yer bed, moanin' and cryin' and shoutin'," cried Euphemia excitedly, "an', O ma mannie, A thocht ye wad never be well, and a' the time ye were —"

"Hush! Hush! Mrs. Macdonald, you must not excite the patient," said the Doctor in a voice that was a mixture of gentleness and asperity. He bent over Jim and gave him something in a glass. The Giganticulus, as heroes

always do in novels when they recover from a serious illness, sank into a sound and natural sleep.

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The next time he looked upon the day with the full light of consciousness, he discovered that the orbits of people in general were no longer disturbed by him. Everything was going on just as usual. Only he was confined to his bed and must stay there for a week or ten days longer at the least. Alexander went down to the Quarries every day while Euphemia bustled about the house. Jim could hear her bustling from his bedroom. Most people know the dreary loneliness of convalescence. The Doctor's visits are welcomed as a break in the monotony of the day, and so Jim eagerly anticipated those of Dr. Spens. For the first three or four days he felt pretty weak and heard the village news with only a languid interest. There were things, however, that remained in his mind in spite of weakness and pneumonia. overpast, about which he would have liked to speak. Only he felt too shy. Had Jessie been to the cottage since the beginning of his illness? Had she left him any message? Would she come again soon? No one had said anything to him about the bull. Jessie must have explained the whole story. How he longed to meet her in order that he might offer his thanks. As we have mentioned above, three or four days went by and nothing was heard of or from Jessie McLure. A haunting fear grew up in his mind that she might have left Tuchan. He remembered that her stay was not to be for long. As his strength returned, so returned by degrees the violence of his old desire, and hour after hour he lay upon his back thinking, till his contending passions began to rack him with nearly unabated force. He did not know that, although consciousness had been lost, his tongue had not been tied.

So, had not the Doctor spoken to him first, he would, sooner or later, infallibly have spoken himself. When the Doctor did speak Jim heard him in a stupor of amazement.

"My dear Jim," he said, sitting one morning on the edge of the bed, the fifth after Jim's recovery, "you don't recollect the occasion, naturally, but some seventeen years ago I brought you into the world and a very ticklish business it was. Perhaps this struggle I had to keep you alive has affected our relations. I do not know. Anyhow I've always taken an interest in you, an exceptionally keen interest."

Jim, with his red head propped up on the pillow and his great length uncomfortably stowed in the small bed, was rather abashed.

"The thing is," continued Dr. Spens, "and I don't feel that by this information I am divulging anything of confidence, that the Minister is determined not to let this affair of the bull rest. Your illness has made no difference at all to his state of mind. He is absolutely convinced that you should be punished." James Macdonald wished to ask a question but the words stuck in his throat and he waited.

"Yes," said the Doctor, "and I suppose, strictly speaking, I ought to share his opinion, but, somehow, James, I don't know why, I want you to get off this time. I feel I can make some excuse for you. You were on the very threshold of fever and I think we can hold that you were not really responsible for your actions."

A sentence burst weakly from Jim's throat.

"Doctor, I juist remember tellin' the story to the Meenister before I became unconscious. It's naethin' but the truth."

"I heard you told a story to the Minister."

"It was the truth, Sir," cried the Giganticulus eagerly. Dr. Spens frowned and bit his lip.

"I did not hear the exact rights of it," said he.

"I couldna tell the hale thing exac'ly seein' that I promised nae to say the lassie's name."

The Doctor frowned again.

"The lassie's name was guessed," said he.

James cried out.

"You said her name was Jess McFarlane, Jim, in your delirium, and so the Minister guessed you meant Jessie McLure. Did you?"

The Giganticulus shook his head.

"I mauna say," he replied.

"If it was another girl," answered the Doctor slowly, "I must really advise you, Jim, to tell her name if you wish your story to be believed and to gain any corroboration. I may as well tell you that the Minister asked Jessie McLure whether you had saved her life from the bull and that she wholly denied the fact."

Then it was that Jim stared in a stupor of amazement.

The Doctor continued with hardly a pause after this statement, as if anxious to get an unpleasant task finished.

"I] would take your word, for I certainly never remember your having told me an untruth, but the circumstances connected with all this are rather peculiar, are they not? You were delirious all last week, I may say, and you cried out a good many things that people usually keep to themselves. Miss McLure, for instance. Very natural you should (he coughed), but, my dear Jim, I'm afraid it's my duty as an old friend, to tell you that she could not possibly ever think of marrying (he coughed again, such was his habitual sensitiveness in discussing delicate subjects), but after all, never mind that. I'm sure you're a sensible young fellow at bottom, Jim, and the chief thing is for you to see that your story is absolutely uncorroborated and really impossible. You must come to think of it as it is — the creation of a fevered

brain. How could you, a mere boy, throw down a bull? Impossible. You have just dreamt the whole thing, Jim. That's the only rational explanation. You had something to do with the bull. What — is at present wrapped in mystery. Perhaps you will remember later. If so, let me, your best friend here, know. If not, never mind. Listen, Jim, this is what I really wish to speak about. Here, in Tuchan, you're doing no good. If you like, when you get quite well, I'll smuggle you out of this and set you up somewhere else. Think over it. You'll be able to turn over a new leaf. Let me know as soon as you've made a decision. Never mind thanks. Good-bye. I'll see you to-morrow afternoon."

Dr. Spens, in an agony at having been so intimate, picked up his hat from the bed, smiled quietly at Jim, who had not spoken a word for five minutes, and left the room, little knowing that his well-meant words had fallen like a match into a magazine of powder.

Jim still stared before him in a stupor of amazement.

Jessie McLure denied that he had saved her life. It was incredible.

That the Doctor believed in his story no more than the others, was in comparison a matter of infinitely little moment, and that he made an offer that exemplified the shy generosity of his nature, made equally little impression on the mind of the Giganticulus.

It was entirely occupied by the Doctor's disclosure. Jim had pardoned her for telling Johnny Findlater that he was drunk, and possibly he had been right to pardon her. At the moment the fever was shaking him from head to foot, flushing his cheeks, tying his utterance. With his general reputation, and she indubitably knew something of it, such an inference was not wholly unnatural, and also! Jim could have pardoned her almost anything. But this — this — this he could not understand. She

had denied the great feat for which, eye to eye and hand in hand, she had praised him: forborne testimony to the one thing of his life that showed his abnormal size and strength to be a gift of price, not a hideous and merciless handicap: forsworn the secret tie that bound them together, a secret beautiful and almost holy in its hiding-place of their two hearts and yet more beautiful and holier directly it should become a secret no longer. Till that moment he had felt that this secret did indeed bind them together, whatever the rest of Tuchen might think, momentarily and ignorantly, whether they believed in the story or not.

And now he had been denied — denied where with all the burning fire of impulse he had placed his faith. My Masters, do you call this rise and this fall of Jim irrational and illogical? What is faith, then, unless it is, in its very essence, illogical and irrational? If logic and reason are the greatest things in the world, then is faith nothing.

For two hours he lay restlessly turning in his bed. Despair, as the old romancers say, was no word to image the appalling chaos reigning in his mind. And what, after all this, was the result of our foolish coxcomb's huge and terrible agony?

There had been the episode of the road when Jessie told Johnny Findlater that he was drunk.

Now there was this Doctor's story.

Surely such things were enough. Doubtless he came to the conclusion that Jessie had treated him shamefully, and was not worth bothering about. Oh! no, he didn't.

He just thought that there must have been some mistake.

Decided that, at the first opportunity, he must see Jessie and tell her what the Doctor said. Her fair fame must not be so besmirched.

With his eyes turned to the ceiling, he lay in bed following up a new train of thought.

CHAPTER XLII

IT was 10.15 A.M. when Dr. Spens left the Macdonald cottage and in the top bedroom a wonderfully distraught Jim.

11.5 when he called to Donald his taciturn groom-gardener to put his mare in the gig.

11.20 when Johnny, Jessie, and Mrs. McLure arrived at the House on the Road to the Quarries.

11.35 when young Findlater gave two bright and amiable smiles and waved from the receding gig. One smile was for Mrs. McLure, the other for Jessie.

11.37 when that distinguished visitor finally disappeared from Tuchen after a stay of little over a fortnight. It only took a couple of minutes for the Doctor's brisk-trotting little mare to whisk them out of sight round the corner.

11.42 when Mrs McLure said, "How wearisome to think that we've got to move the day after to-morrow, ma dear."

11.42.1" when Jessie replied fiercely, "I wush we were leavin' the verra minute and nae waitin' anither twa days."

12.20 when mother and daughter got back to the Manse (Mrs. McLure was *not* a fast walker), and the Reverend Simon asked, "So, and did you see the last of Johnny?" and Mrs. McLure replied in the affirmative.

She was perfectly right. They had.

CHAPTER XLIII

WE have mentioned somewhere that this spring became the hottest summer known for years, and now for three weeks the sun had blazed down with unremitting fury. Not the least little drop of rain had fallen. In spite of the youth of the year, the grass and the woods were parched and faint with thirst.

All the air was charged with electricity. The quarrymen, in nothing but shirts, open at the neck, and corduroy trousers, were near stifling at their work, and the women, left at home, toiled up the steep street of Tuchan mopping their foreheads. What then must it have been like at wash-tub and oven? The nights were more oppressive than the days. There is always something vigorous in the heat of the sun, however fierce it may be. When, however, that relentless luminary had sunk to his rest behind the island of Ruish, it seemed as if all the air, as well as all light, had deserted the little strip between the loch and the mountains. By some freak of nature, it had generally clouded over during those three weeks, and stars, such as had shone the evening of the meeting between Jessie and Johnny and James Macdonald, had been a rarity. With the dark there brooded over Tuchan a restless foreboding of change. Everybody's nerves were on edge. It was in vain for the tired quarryman to try to smoke his pipe peacefully, as he was wont, in the lighted quadrilateral of his doorway. The pipe would not draw properly. He itched all over. He could not keep still in one place. The wife was out of temper. Angry voices and impatient exclamations echoed down the main street. The children

could not sleep properly, fretfully cried all night long. Yet there was nothing the matter with anybody. It was just the weather. Here the philosopher cannot help observing for how much the weather is responsible. If there was such a thing as an ideal climate, there would certainly be ideal human beings.

During the whole three weeks, it had never been so hot as it was to-night.

"Ouf!" said the Reverend Simon as he leant back in his chair and mopped his forehead (by his suggestion chairs had been brought out into the Manse garden), "This heat is abominable. My skin positively prickles all over."

"I wouldn't wonder if it's prickly heat," answered Mrs. McLure in a voice that showed she had made the least possible exertion in speaking. "Ma cousin Alexander, wha's an engineer in the Green Anchor Line, says that the rash comes oot all ower your body like strawberry jam and gives you rest neither day nor nicht."

The Reverend Simon felt very irritable that evening. The idea of his body being covered with strawberry jam did not in the least consort with his dignity as a minister of the kirk.

"It's not nearly hot enough for that," he replied shortly. "They only have prickly heat in tropical climates." Then as if he felt there was something almost blasphemous in having grumbled at the weather, he said, "But, my friends, this is a great opportunity for practising that inestimable virtue, patience. Let us make the best of things. For instance, my dear Mrs. McLure, you felt terribly oppressed inside the house?"

"Indeed I did," answered that lady as she lay almost at full length with her eyes shut.

"Well," replied the Minister, "compare the fresh atmosphere of my garden with that of the drawing-room, which I own was somewhat stuffy." He lifted his large white

face and sniffed. "I declare the night is fragrant. What a delightful thing a garden is! How unfortunate are those compelled to live in cities far away from flowers! Flowers are the same to me as children to the married man, my dear Mrs. McLure. Often, when I am wearied, I pace round my borders and spend an hour or so looking at my little blossoms. Ha — ha! No doubt I seem to you a sentimentalist and perhaps I am. We all have our secrets, do we not? When the crocus burst forth, I feel as if some angel had spread his flame-coloured wings in my garden. When the primroses stream over the banks, I think that a cloud of butterflies have settled in my garden and fallen asleep. Ha — ha! Mrs. McLure, I am not an entirely heartless old bachelor."

Jessie, who was lying in the chair on the Reverend Simon's other side, interrupted and there was something fierce in her voice.

"I think flowers are beautiful, but not as beautiful as all that."

The Minister was, by degrees, talking himself into a good humour. As the rotundity of his periods increased, the irritability of his skin diminished.

"Miss Jessie must not take away any of their beauty from my blossoms. Too harsh a word may crush my little violets altogether. I shall come in the morning and find them vanished away, all because Miss Jessie has spoken harshly of them."

"How could what I say hurt them?" asked she.

"Of course it couldn't *really*," he replied, and she could just discern a quasi-paternal smile on his big white face through the darkness. "It is only my fancy, only the fancy of a poor old man, who loves his little blossoms."

"I declare the heat's waur than ever," groaned Mrs. McLure.

"Patience, patience, dear lady!" cried the Reverend

Simon, spreading out his two white hands, which glimmered, agitating themselves, in the darkness. "Oh! let us make the best of things. We are not sick. We have fed well. We are happy. Does it then matter if we are a little hot?"

"I wush I hadna had three helps o' pastry," replied Jessie's mother with another quite heart-rending groan.

Jessie turned feverishly in her chair two or three times and then got up.

"Where are you going, dear child?" asked Miss McManus.

"I must walk about a little," replied Jessie. "I feel sae restless. I suppose it's the heat. I canna sit still any longer."

"Shall I come with you?"

"Dinna bother!" replied Jessie, "sit still, Miss McManus. I'll be back in a moment or twa."

The Minister's sister touched her hand as she passed.

"You *are* hot, dear!" she cried.

"Ou aye," replied Jessie indifferently, and her slim white figure wandered off till it was lost to view in the little clump of fir trees at the end of the Minister's garden.

When she supposed herself out of earshot of the little group on the lawn, she restrained her tears no longer.

Was all this the weather?

The night became more and more oppressive and the Reverend Simon went on talking, mopping his smooth white face every now and then with his large white handkerchief. There is nothing like preaching for opening the pores of the skin.

Suddenly, in the distance, from over the islands, came a low fierce growl.

"Thunder!" said the Reverend Simon with the air of having made an original remark, as he interrupted his own discourse.

"Thunder!" cried timorous Miss McManus, who was the exact opposite of her brother in nearly every particular, but bowed down before his every word, as if before an oracle.

"Thunder!" groaned Mrs. McLure, raising herself ponderously from her chair. "Then we must move again!"

"I fear so," said the Reverend Simon, looking westward, and as it were into the black of a cavern's mouth. "But hardly yet, Mrs. McLure. We've plenty of time."

"I'm gaein' to get under cover as quickly as possible," replied Jessie's mother, bustling. "The further I am away frae thunder, the better I like it. Wull ye ca' Jessie, Meenister?"

Mrs. McLure and his sister disappeared into the house, as fast as their legs could carry them.

"Yes, there is going to be a storm," said the Reverend Simon, as he still gazed into the black cavern's mouth. "I thought we should have had to pray for rain next Sabbath."

The thunder growled and muttered unceasingly and flash after flash of lightning lit the black forehead of the storm as it travelled towards him.

"No. We shall not have to pray for rain next Sabbath," once again thought the Reverend Simon and, indeed, it became more obvious every moment that any appeal for divergence from the laws of nature on behalf of Tuchan and the surrounding country would be unnecessary. A wind began to mutter in the clump of red pines. Their twisted branches started to creak and to moan. "The little blossoms," which he loved, waved their fragile heads dismally. The wind was the fore-courier of the storm and the full force of it hurried the thunder-clouds over the sea with hurricane wings. It was not many minutes since he had heard the first, fierce, low growl and now the lightning was striking almost overhead and a few heavy goutts of

chilly rain fell on his big, white, upturned face. In a very few minutes the full force of the tempest would break upon the Manse garden.

"Miss Jessie — Jessie — Jessie," cried the Reverend Simon, his voice mingling with the rising sough of the wind and the rain which now hissed down in straight wicked arrows on leaf and petal and shrub. "Jessie," he cried from his place on the lawn, turning his square white face to the little wood, in the direction of which she had disappeared. "There's going to be a thunder-storm. Come in before it begins." Suddenly a scream from the garden shrilled through the wood, and at the same time along the footpath, which ran parallel with the garden-wall for thirty yards or so, ere it reached the gate, the Reverend Simon heard high voices and feet pounding.

CHAPTER XLIV

SWIFTLY, with branched lightning and hissing rain, came up the storm over Ruish.

But, as swiftly, burst that of Jessie's pent-up passion! As fierce was the lightning of her eyes and as endless the rain of her tears. Such similes are, indeed, in the vein of the old romaunts. She was only overheard to utter three words as she buried her white-robed self in the wood of pines which made a high black wall against the hills and the evening sky. Over and over again she repeated them.

"I canna bear it. I canna bear it. I canna bear it."

She was beginning to think that nothing was so beautiful as she once imagined. Not only the Reverend Simon's "little blossoms." She had stamped on a bed of some white things, in the dark she could not see what they were, as she passed. They were dashed now in a thousand fluttering petals.

The talk and laughter of others were intolerable. She must let herself go, alone, in the little dark wood. She had hardly entered twenty paces into it before a gigantic figure rose from the ground and in a hoarse whisper said:

"Jessie."

Her heart stopped for two or three seconds and then bounded on at a scarcely credible rate. A momentary fear deprived her of the power to speak.

Then the hoarse whisper of "Jessie" came again.

With one hand on a tumultuous breast, she stammered, "W — wha's that?"

"Me — Jim Macdonald. Jessie, thank God, ye're come, lass."

"Jim Macdonald — you — what are you doing here? Where have you been hiding?" And then, "Whisper, for guidness sake!"

There was a great and tangled heap of brambles that stood almost on the very edge of the Reverend Simon's lawn. "You shouldna be here."

"I couldna help comin'. Deed I couldna help it."

"Jim — Jim — you maun gae at once," replied Jessie, hardly knowing what she was saying. Her mind was a mixture of terror and loathing. The darkness and the sultriness and the thunderous air lay upon her like a weight.

"Jessie — dinna bid me gae juist yet."

"But, Jim," and something flashed back into Jessie's mind, that she had forgotten owing to the shock of meeting him, "you've been sick."

"Sae the Doctor tells me, Jessie."

"Pneumonia."

"Sae they ca'd it."

"Ye sud be in your bed — nae here in the cauld."

"A'm hot, burnin' hot, an' weel eneuch the noo."

"Ye'll dee."

"I'm nae sic a weaklin' ava'. I heard ye greetin' the noo."

"When?"

"As ye came intae the wood."

"I wasna." But even as she denied the truth, once more a sob shook her from head to foot.

"Jessie, what ails ye?"

"Naethin'."

"For why are ye greetin' then?"

Another sob was the only answer. Every clumsy word from Jim's mouth hurt her.

"Jessie, I'm wushin' to speak wi' ye."

"Jim, you had better gae hame."

"I maun speak wi' ye first. It's sairous."

"Och! Jim, what is it? Canna ye see I'm nae well."

"What ails ye then?"

"Naethin'."

Jim was utterly perplexed by these feminine proceedings, and, while he pondered, terror began to master Jessie's surprise. What did it mean being left alone, like this, in the wood with Jim?

"Ye had better gae," she said again tremulously.

"Nae before I've spoken wi' ye," replied Jim with unwonted obstinacy.

Rascally, scoundrelly Jim loomed up before her, a vague shadow against the inky blackness of the wood. The first, distant growl of thunder passed unnoticed by them both. She turned suddenly to flee with a vague terror in her heart.

Jim caught her arm. It was useless to attempt escape from that shoulder-of-mutton hand. She was going to scream. Then checked herself in the nick of time. That abominable affair of the bull held her continually prisoner. If she screamed and was rescued, she must explain her connection with Jim.

The whole business would come out.

Then, and for the first time since this hateful interview in the wood, a little accusing voice began to whisper to her that a few days ago there had been much talk about this very same bull and about this very same Jim.

Tuchan had been amused though angry. This same Jim had never before been credited with such powers of invention.

It appeared he had not actually mentioned her name in his romantic though impossible story, even while delirious, but there was no doubt at all that she was designated as heroine.

"Monstrous — absurd — impossible — insolent," had roared the Reverend Simon, with his square, white forehead furrowed in anger.

"Impudent," had added Johnny, supplying one of the few adjectives that the Minister omitted. (Oh! Johnny, misery — misery!)

And while Mrs. McLure murmured sleepy astonishment, Jessie had said nothing. Only gathered from the Reverend Simon that (1) it was the very crown of Jim's impudence to be smitten ill at such a moment, if he was as ill as Dr. Spens made out, for the Doctor was always inclined to favour him unduly, Heaven alone knew why, and that (2) the matter should be sifted to the bottom directly he recovered and he, when proved guilty as he undoubtedly was, sent before the magistrates.

And Jessie — said nothing.

Of course this was not exactly the same as openly saying that the whole story was an invention as far as she knew. In fact, so she told herself, everything should be divulged as soon as Johnny left Tuchan.

But now Johnny had left (misery! misery!) and Jim was here (most inconvenient and not a little terrifying): and her part in the drama still a mystery.

* All this took but a moment or two to flash through her quick brain and, when Jim spoke again, she had already made a mental resolution that she must be wary. He held her always in his huge hand.

"Is Johnny still here?" he said.

The recollection of that distinguished young gentleman's last bright and amiable smile recalled all her might-have-been to Jessie. Jim had his revenge, unknown to himself. The subtlest revenges are always those of which we know nothing. If Jessie had plunged him into Hell, he gave tit-for-tat.

"He went this morning," she replied, fighting hard that her misery should not once more overcome her. She would not show in tears before anyone, such was her pride, least of all Jim. He drew a great sigh of relief (foolish fellow).

"I heerd talking in the garden, but I didna ken wha was there."

"Say what ye hae to say quickly, Jim, and dinna let anyone hear."

"First of a', Jessie," he said eagerly, "I wasna drunk when ye met me on the road twa weeks syne. I was sick. I couldna staund richt. Ma heid buzzed."

"I ken—I ken," she cut in almost peremptorily, and then added in a voice which sounded sullen and grudging, "I'm sorry that I said sae, Jim."

"Ye hurt me at the time, Jessie, but I saw it was ma pairt to forgive ye because ye didna ken that I was sick, and when ye saw that I couldna staund and —"

"Is that a' ye hae to tell me? If sae, there was nae need. I kenned this while ye hadna been drinkin'."

"Och," cried Jim, rapturously (such a dull-witted and ecstatic coxcomb surely never was heard of), "I've been wae since I saw ye last, forbye when I was sick and kenned naethin', thinkin' a' the time —"

"Forget your thoughts and gae hame, Jim!" She turned suddenly and would have flitted through the bushes back to the lawn, a great thankfulness in her heart. It was only this—whether or not she had considered Jim tipsy, and by no means the affair of the bull. She would have flitted, glad at heart (says the historian), but as suddenly and as irresistibly as before the hand of the Gigan-ticulus shot out and detained her by her skirt.

"Ye've lichtened ma hairt muckle, Jessie," came the hoarse voice of that dimly seen mass of human flesh, bones, hair, fibres, skin, ligaments, and cartilages, "but that isna what made me come here."

"What then?" asked she with a deep and dark foreboding.

"The bull," he said.

And in dreadful silence, as if turned to ice, she heard.

"It's deid," continued the Giganticulus. "Mebbe the Meenister tauld ye?"

Jessie answered with a mumble that might have been either affirmative or negative. She could but fence for the moment.

"Aye," continued Jim, "his shoulder was sae badly hurt that Fairmer Thamson shot him. I didna mean to hurt him, ye ken."

As Jim spoke all the horror that Jessie felt at such a monstrosity as Jim came back. There was everything unnatural, bestial about such a creature. He *was* a creature. Little else. Half-animal. She shuddered and drew away.

Jim attributed this motion to some feminine shrinking at the bull's untimely fate.

"'Truth, lass, it was a peety," said he, "but it couldna be helpt," and then gave a history of the Reverend Simon's persecution. "I promised ye never to tell your name as ye bade me an' I haena, and sae they dinna believe the tale."

She muttered another indistinguishable word or two.

"Ah!" continued the Giganticulus proudly and with that new sense of dignity that had come upon him since he recognised some service in his mighty strength and stature (neither full-grown yet, mark you), "they winna believe that I hae sae muckle force as tae throw ower a young bull, and they said 'Where's the lassie? There's nae lassie. It's a lee. If there were a lassie, she wad come forward and say it a' happened indeed.' But, ye ken, Jessie, as I'd promised, I cud say naethin'. D'ye understaund?"

At any rate she had understood Jim well enough to know that he would not break his promise.

But did she understand fully?

All that lay underneath such a fantastical chivalry as Jim's? His illness seemed to have fallen so pat. She had

hoped to have left Tuchan before she met him again. It was abominable that he should climb into a private garden in such a way. Her hatred of him blazed into a bonfire that consumed all the minor moralities. Why was she to be so tortured this evening?

Yet she must say something civil to the beast who destroyed beasts.

"It was verra kind of ye to keep the promise."

"But, Jessie, can your mither bear the news the night or the morn, if ye've quite recovered, nae forbye ye've quite recovered. Ye see it's this way. The Meenister —"

James came to a full stop. Why did not Jessie give him back his promise? He had never really believed the Doctor's story. There must have been some mistake. Now Jessie would give him back his promise at once. It was for the tie between them, not the Reverend Simon, that he cared. O, crack-brained, romantic fellow, he would not believe the Doctor's story. \

Jessie remained silent and motionless, her white skirt still grasped in Jim's hand. The way of escape was no longer open to her. She must either confess that the hideous, hateful monstrosity had saved her life and publicly blazon his benefit (what then would all think of her not having spoken at once or at any rate sooner?) or deny him altogether. In the first alternative admit a bond with the being she loathed most on earth and another with him she loved best and had lost (oh! misery, misery), in the second commit an act of treachery and black ingratitude of which she had never acknowledged herself capable.

Terribly and swiftly to either side was her black and passionate nature torn in turn.

Nor did she utter a word as she stood rent.

And ever as before the absurd Jim would not believe in the Doctor's story.

"Jessie, lass," he cried, and the mutterings of the thunder

grew louder, unheeded by them both amidst the sough of the coming storm. "That day I owerthrew the bull an' saved your life was the first day that I knew ony guid in this huge body o' mine. A' my life till then it had been shamefu' to me. I wushed a'ways to be like ither bairns an' boys. Ye dinna ken, ma lass, what it is to be sae big. Noo that I hae saved your life by this body o' mine, I cud sing and daunce for gladness. I dinna heed the past. Ye came back tae Tughan tae mak' life happy for me."

The words and thoughts, choked within him for so long, burst forth like a torrent.

"It isna for the Meenister I care. It's that I can think noo I'm guid for somethin' — that there is a secret between us; that only you know I'm guid for somethin'. Naebody else need ken but you, Jessie."

Now surely she would give back the promise. Show there had been some mistake.

He spoke the truth. He liked the secret best, only he must be reassured, now, by her that she had not denied him.

CHAPTER XLV

THE gigantic figure, which grew more and more indistinct as the gloom of the little wood increased, fell on its knees, caught her hands, and kissed them, and, at that audacity, a futile and splendid audacity became the whole living force of the Giganticulus. Jessie may have expected trouble but certainly never a trouble of such a kind. Her hatred and terror of Jim increased ten times, a hundred-fold as his lips touched her skin.

The thought that it should have been Johnny's part and not his to kneel in such an attitude fanned in her a new fury at the wantonness of Fate which ordered things thus. Blue-eyed, fair-haired Johnny left her with no remembrance of him but a bright and amiable smile. Hideous, uncouth, wicked, ridiculous Jim sprawled, sobbing, at her feet. She heard his hoarse voice pouring forth cataracts of words. It was as the time when winter is loosed or the snows pour down from the mountains or the river bursts its dam. The reserve which had always been Jim's till then, both from nature and circumstance, was broken for the first time. Surely such a clumsy, wild, and laughable language of adoration had never before issued from human lips. "Then he is not really human," she thought, and tried again to dart away.

But now the shoulder-of-mutton hands held her wrists faster than any gyves.

"Let me gae, you great beast!" she whispered, courage coming to her with the violence of her hatred and loathing. "What have you come here for? Anyone forbye a gowk like you wad hae known that I loathe and detest

ye and hae done sae ever since we were bairns." The decision over which she had so wavered was made.

Now that the words were out at last, her courage mounted to undreamt of heights. She clenched the little fist of her right hand and struck him again and again on the face, laughing shrilly with joy the while. Truly anger, misery, and hatred had made her even madder than Jim. Yes, there was a strange pleasure in beating this dimly seen face. With every blow she seemed to be paying off a score against fate.

Up till that moment Jim had been more or less sane. Whatever are the afflictions of the mind, whatever the sufferings of the body, it is easy to be sane so long as faith is left. But when that is lost, the faith held dearest of all things, who shall remain wholly sane then? Irrationally, absurdly, Jim had put all his eggs in one basket, all his treasure in one chest, all his faith in Jessie and the secret tie between them. The day the secret was known would only draw them closer together. Dr. Spens could have told him, any doctor could tell *you*, that it is highly imprudent to fasten your mind on one thing to the exclusion of all others. Any old market-woman would supply her testimony to the danger of putting all your eggs in one basket.

Yet such is the way of the poor, who have only one basket. If they want eggs, they must take the risk. Such is the way of the silent, humble, and shy. They must also take the risk.

However childish and fantastical his behaviour, Jim might, warrantably, have been called sane before. But then his eggs were all sound and fresh.

That blow from Jessie broke them all.

All his beautiful eggs.

And perhaps the reader will remember the effect made on Jim when Jessie struck him that noon years ago.

He heard her call him "A great beast."

Felt a score of blows from her hard little fist upon his upturned face.

Caught that she loathed him and had loathed him always.

She had spoken or rather whispered with such clarity of meaning that even to one of Jim's confused and tumbled brain the words could have no other meaning.

"Yes," cried Jessie, careless now whether anyone from the Manse heard her or not, "the Minister told me the story. I kenned the bull was deid and that ye were suspected of having killed it. The Meenister an' O, he was an angry man, said ye did it oot o'malice and spite. That ye were tired of frichtening wee bairns and tried for a change the frichtening an' the hurting o' puir wordless animals. These were the words o' the Meenister, an' ma mither believed them an' Miss McManus believed them. They believe them still. For why? Because I never said a single little word to mak' them think anything else. That day ye saved me from the bull was hatefu' to me then and wull be hatefu' a' my life. That was why I bade ye say naethin' to naebody and nae for my mither's sake. Naethin' wad frichten her. She's as placid as a coo an' as sleepy as a dormouse.

"I bade ye say naethin' because I hated the very thocht o' your having saved me, ye ugly, feckless, speechless, dirty, mannerless loon. I wad suner hae been saved by a convict frae a gaol than you. I think I wad suner hae been caught and killed. I wad hae run tae the bull not frae him, had I known it was you. I'm not like the ithers, not like Mr. McManus, an' I pity him in my heart if he thinks y'are, in truth, wicked and cruel as he says. Nae, I ken ye better. If ye were really as wicked and cruel as he says, I micht like ye. As it is, I despise ye and hate ye and hae done the same ever since I was a bit bairn because

y'are a lumbering, stupid, helpless, hopeless fule an' the ugliest, biggest, and clumiest gawk anyone has ever seen or is likely tae see. I knew, when ye were at schule, that ye hated bein' sae big an' that the thocht of it made ye miserable. An' every minute, every hour I was glad of it. Every time that I brocht a tear intae your ee, I was glad of it. Every day that I made miserable for ye, I went hame happy. Noo I hae naethin' left tae love, but, thank God, I hae you still tae hate. Hate is somethin' of a luxury, my ugly Jim. O, I hate you, how I hate you! When ye saved me frae the bull, d'ye ken what it was that made a' hate of ye come back, bigger and bigger and bigger than it ever was in the auld schule days. Juist this, this, ye red-haired beast. Juist because I saw it made ye proud o' your huge an' ridiculous body, the body that a' we bairns used tae mock at, the body that made ye miserable, an' me happy because ye were miserable. When I saw the licht o' pride in your ee instead o' the auld sadness, I reckoned a gey ill day that made sic a change in ye, and pit me under sic an obligation.

"I believe ye thocht that I admired ye for your huge strength. Eediot! When ye tauld me ye had owerthrown the bull, ye seemed to me hairdly human. Ye seemed juist a beast wha focht wi' beasts. The sicht of ye revolted, disgusted me. I hate your ugly big haunds. I hate your red hair. I hate your stupid, hideous face. I hate every pairt of your monstrous body. Och! Jim, hoo I hate ye!

"An' noo, I'll tell ye straicht. I winna beat the bushes langer. Wad I had said a' this at first, but I was a coward an' a fule, like a' us wretched weemen. I wad'na say a word tae keep ye frae the gaol doors. I wad'na lift a finger to save ye frae hangin'. Sae, Jim, they can send ye tae prison, and for the joy of it my heart wull sing. Wad I cud gloat ower ye as ye did a felon's wark or sat in a felon's cell!

"It's oot at last. I'm lichters for it. My heart is even singing the noo juist for the joy of tellin' ye what I think of ye an' hurtin' ye ance mair as I did in the auld days, hurtin' ye mair, I'm hopin'. The anely thing that grieves me is that I ken I cud never hurt ye sae much again.

"It's oot at last and noo ye can do what ye like wi' me. Kill me if ye wull. I dinna care to live noo. I've lost the same as you, my ugly hatefu' Jim. I ken hoo it feels — as if ye dudna wush tae live ony mair. That's why my hairt is singing. I ken hoo ma words, every little word o' mine, hurts ye, an' I'm glad for it. My heart is singing, singing, singing because I've hurt ye as much as I hate ye."

Even as one torrent answers another in the silence of the mountains that huddle into the sunset round the gigantic twins, More and Moich, so did the passionate voice of Jessie answer the passionate voice of Jim in the silence of the pine-wood. The clarion of hate blew defiance to the sobbing harp of love. But stay! The romantic situation is carrying away the feelings of Jim's biographer, himself alas! too easily a prey to all the seductions of romance. Our Jim's voice never, at any time, in the slightest degree resembled the melting, plucking tones of vibrating harp-strings. He possessed, when in good health, a most resonant, stupendous, ear-shattering, tempestuous, inhumanly huge, fantastic, wonder-provoking bellow. In the weakness of convalescence and in the extremities thereof, it had been most lamentable, pitiful, and low, a most unmelodiously hoarse croaking.

But now, and as it seemed, from another world, came a cry in a well-known and rotund pulpit organ.

"Jessie, Jessie, where are you? Miss Jessie, why don't you answer?"

At this voice from her former life her courage suddenly

failed and the storm, travelled over Ruish, burst gigantically over their heads.

A blaze of lightning lit up the wood and showed every tree trunk and naked red branch silhouetted, and between them the loch and the hills beyond it. From just overhead, it seemed, came a terrific roll of thunder. It clanged and reverberated in heaven in a long-drawn shattering peal and died away and left the darkness shuddering.

For a couple of minutes there was a terrified silence of all nature, and, during them, Jessie and Jim stood motionless. The suddenness of that roar from heaven had stricken all movement out of them both. There came another sword of lightning that pierced the pitch-black sky from end to end and a volley of thunder even more stupendous than the last. Then another terrifying silence. In those two vast illuminations of the earth and the empyrean she had discerned plainly the huge kneeling figure, the huge face, all brown-spotted with freckles and deathly white, except that a bright flush of carmine stood on each cheek-bone. It needed no trained eye to see that Jim was ill. Dying perhaps? She might have killed him by her words. Jessie, sane once more, having seen, became as the feeblest of her sex. There was another roar of thunder following on the glare of a still vaster lightning, and then the approaching hiss of rain merged in a swashing, drowning deluge. The next moment she felt herself seized by Jim's enormous arms in a stupor of swishing rain, rattling thunder and terror, felt his hot, loathsome kisses planted on her face, neck, hair, anywhere. She screamed now, but it was in vain, and struggled. She had called Jim a beast. He uttered nothing but hoarse, hideous, beastlike cries. All the barriers of self-restraint had been broken down. He was, in fact, nothing now but the animal which Jessie had called him.

Once more the Red Mist came into his eyes and, the

weakness of convalescence vanished completely, he knew again the feeling of superhuman strength. The brute awakened in him made him seize what he had a fortnight ago considered almost too divine, too remote for contemplation. He caught up Jessie with his gigantic strength and squeezed her close as he could to himself; smelt the scent of her hair; felt the warmth of her body; the throb of her breast. As a matter of fact, he was almost unconscious of his own actions. The fever, which had barely left him, began to return after such an exposure, and chaotic, monstrous, terrible phantasms to surge through his brain, things to which he could, in saner moments, hardly have given a name. There was fury in him that must be somehow appeased, an inextinguishable wrath against God and man, a tumultuous revolt against all barriers. He had fixed all desires of his huge and passionate self on one thing, and it had been taken away. In hardly a moment all his honour had fallen. He knew that the Jessie whom he crushed in his arms was not the real Jessie that he wanted. The ideal he wished in her fled farther away every moment that he held her, but the brute in him had a primary relief in uncontrolled action. Yet the knowledge of this, which acted automatically on him, not consciously, only served to heighten his frenzy. She lay limp and motionless in his arms after a while and her cheek was cold to his kisses, yet he knew that hatred and contempt of himself were mistress of that limp and motionless form: that, henceforward, she would hate and despise him more: that to arouse her would only be to hear the same words again.

Whatever he did, however long he held her in his arms, however he might try to appease the tempestuous gusts of passion that swept through him, the result must in the end be the same. Yet jealousy and anger at the contempt in which she held him forbade him to

let her go and leave the garden. The very thought that she loathed his embraces as something poisonous and disgusting filled him with a huge and roaring spirit of revenge.

It was in this spirit that he cried:

"I'm thinkin' your wushin' it was Johnny here and not me."

This insult gave him a fierce pleasure. He hoped to arouse the cold Jessie. That would evoke a kind of pleasure. But Jessie gave no answer.

And down upon them, locked together, poured the drowning rain: above them rattled and volleyed the thunder: over their heads daggers of lightning stabbed the gloomy arras of the heavens.

It was not a couple of minutes since Jessie had heard the Reverend Simon's voice, but in that time Jim had moved leagues in the darkness of the whirlwind.

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And now one fact must be brought forward by his biographer, and that is the extraordinary effect the overthrow of the bull had made on his character. Since the discovery that there was some good in his enormous strength, a new feeling of pride had gradually begun to grow up in him, and, without a doubt, his attitude towards his vast and ever-higher towering self was no longer only that of shame, uneasiness, and secret misery, but sometimes of surprised interest. His fibre was toughened by this. He had become, though he may not have known it, in many ways more hopeful. So it was *anger*, not *abject humiliation*, which Jessie's fierce words had aroused in him, an all-embracing, uncontrollable anger. He knew that she owed her life to him, and when he compared the fragile limbs and delicate face of the acute Johnny he, himself, felt a contempt for both the boy and the girl. The con-

tempt which sincerity feels for insincerity, and strength feels for weakness. All these variations of mood and thought swept through him as he held Jessie in his arms and felt her grow colder and colder. And then *Anger* seized hold of him again — *Anger* that he had duped himself — *Anger* against God and man — *Anger* that in spite of everything he still wanted to feel Jessie, warm and throbbing, in his arms, not cold and motionless, and uttering low words of love, not high, fierce words of hate.

And all the time he knew that this could never be. Those ten minutes spent in the wood had been computed as hours in the Measure of his Life.

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And now voices filled the corners of the little wood and feet sounded hurrying and trampling, even though the storm never ceased its uproarious tumult.

"Jessie — Jessie — Jessie," cried the voices.

And now, "Jim — Jim — Jim!"

The lightning flashed again and the pursuers saw the figure of the Giganticulus standing or rather stooping with the girl in his arms, a wild, hunted look on his face. A simultaneous shout arose from the Reverend Simon, Alexander, McIntosh, and two other quarrymen, who accompanied them.

Jim loosed his hold of Jessie and turned. At once she fell, for she had, long ago, fainted.

CHAPTER XLVI

IT did not take a moment to leave the garden by the way he had come. A heave of his huge arms and a spring of his huge legs and he was over the Manse wall and upon the pathway which led to the road, in the tenth of the time it would have taken an ordinary person to climb the obstruction. At once he found a relief in running with enormous strides through the buffeting wind and spouting rain. He sprang forward, unconscious of everything save the desire to move. Anger still ruled him though the impossible was banished. "Jessie said I was drunk," spoke Fierce Contumacy within him, "I winna be accused for naethin'. I'll get drunk the nicht, if I can."

And his brain, which, in the last week or two, had begun to work for the first time, formed an idea, to be fully developed later.

From behind the garden wall came loud outcries.

"Jim's awa'. Stop him! He'll dee." But Jim, if he heard the cries, paid no attention. With strides of his great earth-measuring legs, he sped up the Tuchar road, ponderous, violent, vast, irresistible. Woe to anyone who tried to stop him! The Red Mist incarnadined everything he saw. Superhuman strength lay in every joint, muscle, nerve, artery, limb of his gigantic body.

The scent of Jessie's hair was still in his nostrils: he felt her bosom's throb against his own: her cold cheek against his lips, but the more he bounded, the swifter he ran, the further he would be away from her.

He would put the impossible behind him and know

that, whatever else happened, there was one part of Jessie he could never win. Did the *ideal* in her still exist, or did it exist in Jim only? Ah! cries the philosopher, once more interrupting the course of the narrative, this is, indeed, a super-subtle question. Did he love Jessie for something in herself, or for something in himself, or for something outside self? Not all the divings, probings, formulæ, examinations, scientific or philosophical, parallels historic, arguments synthetic, will ever quite get to the bottom of the mystery. *Odi et amo*. Long ago, two thousand years before Jim was born, the discovery was made that one could love and hate at the same time. Meanwhile Alexander, hoisted up onto the garden wall painfully and with groans, peered into the impenetrable blanket of the dark and cried fitfully:

“Jim’s awa’. Stop him! Stop him!”

But there was no one on the road between them and Tuchan and if there had been, nothing could have availed, that night, against the angry, passion-fanned, fevered strength of the Giganticulus. As it was, with earth-measuring bounds, far out of their hearing and sight, had sped the dangerous Jim. He reached the first cottage in Tuchan, which belonged, as we know, to the McIntoshes. Mrs. McIntosh was at her door alone, her man having gone to aid Alexander in the search for his son, and she heard Jim far down the road, listened astonished, then blanched with fear as he rushed by her, swift and big as some locomotive, bounding, waving his arms, shouting imprecations, with red locks flying, yelling and groaning alternately.

She shrieked as he passed and Jim shook his fist at her.

She had one glimpse of glittering madman’s eyes, a convulsed countenance; and that was quite enough.

This was the moment of Jim’s revenge on Tuchan. The sight of the familiar, winding, climbing little street,

the lighted quadrilaterals of the windows fast closed against the storm, the white walls dimly looming in the darkness, on which, probably, ancient, almost effaced "Jims" still lingered, brought back to him as it were memories of a former life, though hardly two hours had gone since he escaped from the Macdonald cottage. How many times had he slunk, lumbered up and down that street since the days when, clothed in the ridiculous sack-petticoat, he had joyously and wantonly pursued cats and hens, bawling at the top of his puppy-voice! How many twinges, miseries, and memories the sight of this little street brought back! What a power it had over him in that former life, which, dimly remembered, still hurt him. But now, as he leapt and bounded up it, he seemed to have power over the street — that main street of Tuchan. Though the recollections which the sight of it brought back hurt him, they were no longer crushing hammer-blows, only sharp little pin-pricks. The new trust born in him by the overthrow of the bull had grown stronger and stronger till it had become an almost irresistible force.

In the old days he had, while sitting in his eyrie on the hills, seen how small Tuchan looked from the height, discovered his own unimportance as he gazed over the Calder Valley towards the great twin-mountains. His sorrows lessened then, because they and himself became, in such moments, so petty.

Now, on the other hand, they appeared petty because he was so huge. In his delirium, in his anger and fever, he was, for the first time, a giant stalking among pigmies. Not a calm benignant giant but a furious. He magnified, even, to himself the strength which was his. There was no stupendous feat of which he was not capable, no opposition which could stand against him, if he wished to overthrow, as he had overthrown the bull. He was master even of the storm. And, now, how he longed to

make use of his superhuman strength! The immense pity that dwells in the hearts of giants had momentarily vanished. How he longed to run amuck through Tuchan, banging together heads; overturning and trampling bodies; showing his Giganticulus' derision and contempt of the people, who hardly reached his shoulder! Mrs. McIntosh had shrieked and fast closed her door, and the cry and the bang had roused the curiosity of the next-door neighbour. A face came to the window and peered out. Jim saw it and with one bound was across the street, mopping and mowing at it, dancing with uncouth gestures, and shaking his fists. It was the bearded, lack-lustre, astonished face of a fisherman.

"Come oot! Come oot!" cried the Giganticulus. "I'll settle ye."

And continued his uncouth war-prance, every movement of which showed an incredible strength, clumsy and undeveloped though it might be.

Swiftly and abruptly the face withdrew from the window. The light went out, and Jim heard an inner door bang.

"Coward! Coward! Wad ye rin awa' then? Come oot!" He put the palm of his shoulder-of-mutton hand against the door and gave two enormous slaps or shoves. The whole thing creaked and groaned from top to bottom. The very cottage seemed to shudder. All the windows rattled.

"Let me get in an' bash ye!" he said, but no answer came from the terrified inhabitants. Horrible as the night was, they had fled from the cottage at the still more horrible aspect of Jim. Nor did the Giganticulus trouble to break down the door or pursue his investigations further. A sudden refinement suggested itself to him.

Would it not be more soul-satisfying to deliver his bosom of elaborate almost courtly insult than to make use of the toughened thews and steely sinews of his great body?

Would it not be even more delightful to show *them* what cowards they were all, than to bang their heads together? It would be more humiliating for *them*. "Aye," said the Giganticulus to himself—the amendment was carried unanimously.

So, giving one final and shattering thump on the quaking door before him, he passed on to the next cottage. The inhabitants of this also had been aroused by the uproar. Mother and children were cowering in the bedroom. As the first gigantic blow of Jim's fist fell upon the door, the quivering voice of a quarryman replied from within.

"Gang awa', Jim. Gang awa'. Dinna wake the bairns."

Huge laughter exploded from the mighty cavern of Jim's chest.

"Dinna wake the bairns!" he cried. "Aire they the wee dears that pointed at me on the road mornin' an' night? It wad be a shame if I waked them. I'll juist sing them to sleep."

Oh! Heaven defend us from such a lullaby as Jim's. Wounded tigers never howled as he did for the next ten minutes. Then shouting sarcasm, derision, and defiance, he passed from that cottage to the next, exulting in his strength.

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And thus was his long-delayed revenge upon Tuchan, the birthplace which had despised and abused him, accomplished. So fearful was the sight of him, prancing his war-prance and yelling his war-yell, that none came out singly or by companies to tackle him. Every cottage was full of cowering households, as the Giganticulus raved and bel-lowed in the street, banging on doors with his shoulder-of-mutton fists, yelling insults through darkened and fortified windows, the undisputed and colossal master. Always across the black-dark sky the lightning zigzagged and the

deafening thunders rolled. And from the surrounding hills torrents poured down till the village seemed one built in a lake. That night was like one of those old biblical nights of destruction when the vengeance of Heaven was let loose as well as the vengeance of man.

CHAPTER XLVII

AND now Jim, his mind filled with the surcharged fancies of delirium, passed through the village and ran, with undiminished speed, up the road which led to the Doctor's house and the Stone-Quarries. He bounded and shouted like the possessed thing he was. Through the black vault of the heavens the branched veins of the lightning ran in blinding streaks and the darkness was continually filled with the rattle and crash of thunder. The rain fell in solid walls, through which no eye could pierce. Every now and then the flying feet of the Giganticulus passed little streams, already swollen with the deluge and leaping down into the valley, which he had just left, with the clamour of torrents. An insane strength bore Jim along. Fever sent flame, not blood, through his veins. He ran at a speed that would have rendered pursuit impossible, even had pursuers been able in the blinding rain and the alternations of chaotic darkness and dazzling twin-flashes to mark his track.

Sometimes he ran in silence and sometimes answered the appalling voice of the thunder with his own puny shouting. In that furious convulsion of nature even his gigantic voice sounded like the strengthless utterance of a ghost. Jim, however, was not conscious of a tiny part in such an elemental uproar. The passions which shook him needed some such stage on which to fling themselves loose. He shouted a wild obligato to the crashing drums of heaven and the stupendous orchestra of wind and rain. That vast and almost primeval creature, the Giganticulus, was in tune with an upheaval of nature and nothing else.

The wind buffeted him, the rain stung his face with whips, the thunder cracked, rolled, and stunned all other sounds to silence. Heaven and earth were frenzied this night, but Jim met them on equal terms. As the wind made even his mighty strength sway, he struck at it with his fists, buffeting back his gusty antagonist, to him personified. He ground his teeth with rage at the rain's lashes, it seemed his enemy like everyone else, and his huge laughs of derision answered the bellowings of the thunder.

Once he stood still and roared defiance. A shepherd overtaken by the storm and crouching in a hollow by the roadside saw the raving Giganticulus go by with tangled red locks flying, and shouts of a girl's name mingled with execrations of a man's. It was only in a second-brief glare that he saw him and the next moment the frightful passenger of the hills had vanished into the dark. Such a face! such a size! such speed! The terrified shepherd did not recognise in the sudden apparition the sullen but slow and lumbering Jim Macdonald. The *creature* that passed him had the eyes of a maniac; the mouth open; a crazy and inhuman fury of countenance. It stared at him without comprehension. Then bounded high into the air and with a cry disappeared. It left the man with no impression of humanity, for superstition dies hard in a highland breast and it was a night to let loose dreaded Powers of the Hills. With a face still blanched and a trembling hand, which attempted to cut out of the air the huge form, the shepherd arrived that night in Tuchan. . . .

Dr. Spens' old housekeeper stood at the window of the dining-room after making sure that it was firmly fastened against the driving rain and a wind that perpetually increased in violence. The night was so dark that she could hardly see a couple of yards from the sill, and, dour and fearless though she was, she could not help being a

little terrified at the violence of the storm. The lightning swept in blinding zigzags over the tops of the huddling mountains and gave her momentary views of the doctor's garden stamped vividly in all its detail as the darkness lifted. The tiny lawn; the oblong beds of daffodils and wall-flowers; and a little path running round a shrubbery to the front door. Down the path as the old body peered through the window, she saw in one of these dazzling flashes a gigantic figure come swinging. Then the night fell again like a curtain. Fear, real fear came upon her, though she was accustomed to remain alone in his house while the Doctor went abroad. What there was of her imagination began to work and she imagined the man — there in the darkness — though she could not see him. All the time her Scotch good sense was struggling for the mastery. "Eh!" she said to herself, "it's anely somebody wantin' shelter frae this fearfu' nicht." The roar of the storm was so great that she could catch no noise of footsteps, but she blew out her candle-light, hoping it had not been seen. Next moment, in the utter darkness, she heard a terrific bang at the front door and a great hoarse voice shouting. Fear, real fear, had paralysed her and fixed her to the place at the window. So, when the lightning slashed the heavens a moment after, she saw the figure again clearly and as in the light of day, before the darkness re-descending swallowed it up. Even she, in that moment, did not recognise it. She only knew that it was hatless, red-headed, clothed in dripping garments of an utterly nondescript appearance and huge beyond all imagination. There was time for a pair of blazing, beast's eyes to catch hers, for the dripping, mud-plastered face happened to be turned towards the windows of the Doctor's dining-room. At the next flash she saw it standing straight in front of her, the other side of the pane, and recognised that huge, sullen, and malicious oaf, James Macdonald. It were

difficult to say exactly whether her fears were allayed or increased. It was something to have the name and circumstances of the invader, that no wild robber or murderer was there; but on the other hand the evil reputation of this lad was too general for her not to know it. While she was still wondering whether James Macdonald wished an asylum from the night, the lightning came again. He was waving his arms, and seemed to be shouting, though, owing to the violence of the storm, no words reached her. Then in the darkness she faintly discerned a huge form. The Giganticulus had pressed his face right up against the window-pane. She heard, now, what he was shouting.

“Whuskey!”

His cry rose above the howling of the wind and the lashing of the rain.

“Whuskey!”

When she saw his face again, pressed right against the window, fierce, threatening, and crazy, with open mouth and wildly staring eyes, definite fear seized her. She knew that he had been ill. What was he doing abroad on such a night? It was not fit for a wild animal to be out in, let alone a human being. Definite fear seized her, not so much for herself as for him. She collected all her courage and beckoned to him to come inside. Her voice would never carry through the tempest. The face at the window was convulsed with anger at the delay.

She cowered back into the room, but Jim's voice came to her between a rattle of windows and a roar of thunder.

“I ken weel you're hidin'. Gie me the whuskey. D'ye hear what I'm tellin' ye. If ye dinna, I'll bash in the windies and murder ye.”

Wild words to hear on a wild night, and they put new fear into the housekeeper, fear for herself this time. The words of the huge lout, whose face was pressed against the window, were the words of a furious lunatic. To invite

him into the house would probably be tantamount to suicide. Her mood veered round. She would do anything to get him away from that window — away — away anywhere on the hills, though the rain lashed and the thunder belled and the wind howled.

“I’ll gie ye a minute,” shouted the Giganticulus again. “If ye pit the bottle oot o’ the windie, I’ll nae harm ye.”

The old housekeeper trembling in every limb went to the cupboard, where the particular brand of Mountain-Dew that Dr. Spens affected, was kept. At that moment her scruples seized her again and, with a flight of imagination wholly unusual to her, she came near the truth. He was a wild lad. Jessie McLure and young Findlater had said something in the last two or three weeks about meeting him drunk on the road. Had he taken advantage of Dr. Spens’ absence to get out of bed and drink? Such folly and vicious hardihood were almost inconceivable, but yet the case might stand thus. There were two bottles in the cupboard, one full and the other three-quarters emptied. She must pacify him by giving him whiskey, otherwise he might do more than threaten (she disliked, emphatically, the look of these shoulder-of-mutton hands), but it was her duty to give him the bottle that was nearly empty. She shook them alternately at her ear. A low gurgle gave her the clue to following out her plan, and, with the nearly empty one in her hand, she stumbled across the room to the window.

Probably she would have been too weak to open it without assistance from the fury of the elements, but directly it gave a little, the wind blew in with incredible violence and thrust it together with the old housekeeper back into the room. She staggered, fell up against the Doctor’s Windsor chair, lost her balance and tumbled on the floor. The bottle escaped from her hand and was dashed into a thousand fragments.

Her intentions had been, no doubt, excellent, but it was ordered that they should come to nothing. It was ordered that Jim should survive that wild night, running through the hills, and find on the road — which climbed through the Pass of More and Moich and, descending, on the other side, into a country of lowish rolling heather-clad hills all strewn with rocks, came at last, after ten or twelve miles of winding and dipping, to Duke's Ferry — a fantastic fate to call him from the unhappy past. Had he only drunk a quarter of a bottle of whiskey, he could never have survived the ordeal of that night, but he was to get drunk, gloriously drunk, for the first time in his life, and save himself in that way. The philosopher shows enough self-restraint to refrain here from moralising, although the occasion is excellent and the inferences to be drawn both profound and subtle. A whole chapter might easily be devoted to vast metaphysical issues raised, and the supporters of a Providence, on the one side, and a Fate, on the other, foam in a wordy warfare over the page or pitifully lose themselves and their five senses in the most exquisite hair-splittings. But no! The philosopher throws this chance away as he has thrown so many others and returns with adamant resolution to the narrative.

The thump of the housekeeper's fall would never have been heard by Jim owing to the noise of the storm, but, as she lay upon the floor, the lightning, which had begun to be more intermittent, flared again through the heavens. Every detail of the Doctor's dining-room was stamped vividly upon the retina of the eye of our Giganticulus — the open cupboard, and a bottle of whiskey standing on the edge of the table. Nor were the housekeeper lying on the floor, the overturned chair, and the fragments of glass overlooked. He was sane enough to draw a swift conclusion from his various impressions, for his madness

was due not to want of perception, but rather loss of proportions.

"Get up! Get up!" he roared. "There's anither bottle on the table. Gie me that ane, or I'll tak' it mysel'." He put his red head into the room, and the woman on the floor could plainly detect the outlines of it. In another moment he might be through and with both feet on the carpet. Guid sakes! Moral scruples were forgotten. It was everything, now, to get him away, if the bottle of whiskey was all he wanted. After all, charity *does* begin at home. The wind and rain were whistling into the room, but more terrible than they was the voice of the Giganticulus roaring command. She got to her feet with astonishing agility and, in less time than it takes to write, was mistress of the coveted bottle. The shadow of a huge hand hung before her in the darkness and, reckless of consequences, she joined it and her burden.

The hand seized the bottle, as the trunk of an elephant seizes a comestible, and withdrew, and the next instant she saw the great outline of a human form vanish into the darkness.

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For close on ten minutes the Doctor's housekeeper waited motionless in the place where she stood. The rain poured in through the open window, drenching the carpet to the very middle of the room and making the curtains mere shapeless sops which jerked and flapped and waved and danced and fell as the wind blew them about. The woman became chilled to the very bone as the wet struck through her more or less flimsy blouse, but the only things about her that moved were frenzied streamers of the iron-grey hair. And always, always she listened. Nothing reached her ears but the wind and the rain and the distant

muttering of thunder, for by now the storm had moved further off.

Dour, fearless, and unimaginative she was by nature, but to-night her nerves had received a decided shock.

At last, when, after such a motionless ten minutes, she had heard nothing except the swashing and the howling of the tempest, she made a sudden move towards the window, closed it, and then subsiding on the floor, fainted away for the first time in her life.

CHAPTER XLVIII

BUT James Macdonald ran on.

The winding hill-road curved sharply to the right some hundred yards from the Doctor's. It was from the sharpest point of this curve that Johnny Findlater had smiled his last bright and amiable smile at Tuchan and Jessie.

Here, too, Jim stopped and said "Good-bye" to Tuchan. Down, far down in the little hollow beneath him lay the small village where hitherto he had lived and suffered. The thunder reverberated over it and the rain roared down upon it, and to Jim's crazy imagination it seemed as if the fury of the elements would blot it out.

Before the final catastrophe he was glad, himself, to have thumped their doors and shouted a loud defiance.

For the moment his revenge had satisfied him and the sense of his wrongs, still fresh, been appeased. And then, by one of those queer revulsions of feeling, sadness overcame him at the thought of never seeing again the little village, where he had been born and grown inch by inch, even as ordinary mortals grow, to his immense stature. Hate the inhabitants of Tuchan as he would, the place itself was not odious to him. It was there that he hoped to be buried one day, after, if it might be, a peaceful life, with a rough headstone to commemorate his simple virtues and make no mention of his simple defects. Every bit of it was, as it were, a part of himself. Now, on leaving, he felt as if he were plucking a part of himself out, that part which we still continue to call the heart, and casting it from him. Yes, that night, he had torn up the memories of

Jessie and Tuchan by the roots, and, at that parting of the ways, the rent pained him. With that he turned and ran on again.

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He climbed with gigantic, tireless strides, the whiskey-bottle in his pocket still untasted. On the left the huge mountain bases began to rear themselves. That narrow path which he passed, running faster, led to the Stone-Quarries. Jim shook his fist at it in memory of the past. Even that comparatively calm place had been poisoned to him.

The lightning, now rarer, flamed vivid and in the brief clarity he saw the whole Calder Valley before him, a vast amphitheatre surrounded by hills. All round him they lay like vast recumbent giants themselves, heedless of the uproar, heedless of the tumult in Jim's soul. Ahead were More and Moich with, between them, the strait and narrow gate through which he must pass. The whole valley had been as clear as daylight, the precipitous sides of mountains seamed by watercourses; the road running between tumbled stone-walls; the barns and roofs of Calder's Farm. Thus it flashed into his eye and out again.

Then he plunged forward once more into the darkness, tripping over stones, splashing through pools of water. The road began now to dive down into the valley and Jim had to run by instinct. His nature, only stirred in moments of unusual emotion or excitement, was in ordinary so unambitious or slothful that he had never come as far as this. At the bottom of the hill he kept straight on when he should have turned, and hit a tree with stunning force. A thick branch struck him half on the forehead and half on the temple. This branch was about seven feet from the ground. The tree shook to its very roots and James Macdonald almost fell.

For a moment or two he moved round and round in circles, holding his hands to his head. The blow, when its immediate effect vanished, brought him back to a kind of half-consciousness. He also remembered the whiskey in his pocket.

"The Meenister says I'm a drunkard," he mumbled. "I've been accused o' daein' things wrangly a' my life. If I'm to be thocht wicked onyway, I may as well dae them as not. They say that if ye're drunk ye forget a'. Ony way I'll try."

Then the usual pitiful irresolution, doubly pitiful because of his huge size, at the thought of any new action overcame him.

"I canna even get drunk like a mon," he muttered in self-disgust, and a feeling, almost of fear, was his master for a moment. Then a spirit half of bravado, half of self-pity possessed him.

"I'll get drunk richt here an' noo," he shouted. The storm had now moved further off and muttered in the distance as it circled round the vast tract of hills. Every now and then there were faint glimmers of lightning. Rain was not falling with the same torrential violence, but it came down steadily, pitilessly, and an ever-rising wind drove it into his face with the sting of whiplashes. Jim shivered till his teeth chattered in his head and each shiver was succeeded by a sudden flush of burning heat.

"They a' say I'm a drunkard an' sae I'll get drunk richt here an' noo," he cried again with a mingled roar of self-pity and anger. He stood, with the bottle extracted from the inside pocket of his coat, in his hand, as if listening in the darkness for a voice to answer this terrible threat.

Why was he always alone?

Was there no one to tell him whether he should or should not get drunk?

The lightning glimmered distantly and once more showed him the still, recumbent forms of the old Scotch hills. Immutable, ageless they seemed and silent too, as if they brooded over some eternal problem of their own.

They gave no answer to the Giganticulus.

The bruise on his temple began to throb. Some rather maudlin tears poured down his freckled cheeks and he felt indescribably weak, lonely, and miserable. All vigour and force seemed to have left him. "Losh!" he muttered to himself, "I'll never get to Duke's Ferry by the morn."

The bottle in his hand felt warm and comforting to his cold grasp.

His irresolution vanished and he put it to his lips. How it caught him by the throat, the neat spirit, made him gasp and choke for an instant, and then seemed to overwhelm and annihilate all feeling except that of its hot, rushing self! The criss-cross, interacting forces of his emotions were whirled together and hurried away to somewhere quite remote, as two or three gills of the Doctor's Glenlivet bubbled and gurgled down his capacious gullet. His great mouth remained open until he could no longer hold his breath. The sudden and automatic closing of it bedewed his chin and lips, and Jim licked them eagerly with his tongue as soon as he had taken breath. The centres of his brain were momentarily paralysed and the nerve-messages tapped there in vain. Alcohol had produced a grand insensibility and the idea of his pitiful and neglected condition vanished for a time. With a renewed strength he set forward on his road through the Calder Valley.

It was almost with elation that he ran.

There were three miles and a half from the tumble-down gate, through which he burst with such terrific force that he never noticed any obstruction to the mouth of the forests that clothed all the lower slopes of Moer and Moich, three miles and a half of level road. Nobody is ever likely

to cover them at greater speed than Jim did on that historic night. His footsteps, deep in the mud, were measured next day, and the length of his stride, for the first two miles certainly, was prodigious. It is a pity that the depth of the impressions and their distance from each other were not carefully recorded. Then some skilful mathematician could have calculated his speed, the very time in which the valley was traversed, and Jim, in addition to his other distinctions, might have been the holder of the two-mile cross-country record. As it is, there is only a rough oral tradition in Tuchan which the Athletic Association would of course be unable to accept and I therefore pass it by.

Certainly, he must have bounded along with altogether phenomenal and unprecedented bounds, while the first gulps of spirit did no more than invigorate him. The immediate effect began to wear off, it appears, after the second mile had been covered. One could see that he stood still just by the old thorn-tree which marks the end of the upland pasture. Here presumably he drank as much more as he could, for after this and all through the wild part of the valley where the vast amphitheatre of hills moves out in a half-circle of some fifteen miles, and the long slopes are bare save for the grey herds of enormous boulders, lying there, probably, since the sea filled that basin, his course became considerably more devious, not to say erratic. On three or four occasions he fell down. The marks there on the road and his clothes, next day, bore ample testimony to his tumblings. Several others ran zig-zag fashion. A rag, torn from his trousers, was discovered caught on a rough stone projecting from the top of the wall. They found his left leg rather badly cut the next morning.

Now, for the rest of Jim's running, it is necessary for the biographer to draw upon his own slender imagination

and no longer on fact. The Scotch Giant has a few, very few and vague memories of this night's occurrences, and these for obvious purposes have been somewhat amplified.

CHAPTER XLIX

AT last he began to climb the road where it rose through fir-forests to the narrow mountain-gate between More and Moich. It was as dark as a tunnel and for a moment he hesitated on the entrance to that otherwise impenetrable wall of black.

Then he mumbled once more:

"I maun be in Duke's Ferry before the morn."

This gave him courage and with a lurch and a stumble he cannoned off a tree trunk, by good hap, into the middle of the road. Even he, in such a condition, noticed the contrast between grey darkness, just left, and the utter raven blackness of the forest. Still, it did not daunt him very much. He staggered on and upwards. There was still about half the original contents in the whiskey-bottle, but what he had already drunk had taken away the little sense which remained in Jim's brain.

He was now talking volubly and in a low tone to himself as drunken folk very often do. His moods varied as the alcohol surged through him.

"Jim, my man, I remember noo. You're sick. Why did the Doctor come tae see ye, if ye werena sick. Doctor, I'm feelin' cauld, sae cauld. Losh! it's a fearfu' nicht. Mither, I'm nae a bairn ony mair. Can I hae a drappy o' whuskey to keep awa the cauld?" A voice, Euphemia's voice, seemed to answer him from far away. "Drink, my mannie, drink!" Jim followed the advice of the voice and then memories of the tiny woman flooded his eyes with tears. He blamed himself for the coldness between them. It was not Euphemia's fault that she had never understood. His huge size should not have made such a difference to

him. The misfortunes that happened were his own fault, even as the Reverend Simon said. He, himself, was nothing but a miserable, hulking coward. His enemies were right.

"But," he mumbled, "it's a' ower noo. I've seen the last of Tuchan, the last o' ma mither. Losh! if I staun' here bletherin' I'll nae be at Duke's Ferry before the morn."

These old, evil thoughts hurt him. They must be driven away, forgotten. And so, once more, he carried the bottle in his hand to his lips and drank a great mouthful. His hand trembled so that much of it was spilt and trickled with the rain down his chin; a moiety of the neat liquid scorched his unaccustomed throat and burned like fire in his stomach.

"By Gosh!" he said, "that's graund. I'll hae some mair — whuskey's the stuff!" he cried and staggered from one side of the road to the other. The night was moving round him, swinging dizzily up and down, and the invisible road ever now and then rose up and hit him.

He cursed it and struck it with his huge shoulder-of-mutton fists when down.

"Coward!" he cried, "ye lay still eneuch when I hit ye. Let me walk in peace."

Then he would get up again with the blood pouring from his fingers and knuckles, and sometimes from his mud-splashed, bruised face, and take another drink of whiskey. That put a new strength, though a strength of short duration, into his fever-wasted, passion-wasted limbs.

A mad inclination to sing seized him, but he could remember no tunes. Only strange cries, divided by enormous intervals and varying in length and volume, issued from his lips in a string of mindless vociferations.

And still up the steep slope of the mountain pass he climbed on. Luckily for him the path was fairly broad and straight, broader and straighter than it seemed, from

the other side of the valley. Otherwise he could never have made it to the end. He fell down innumerable times; sometimes over half-buried fir-roots just off the right track, sometimes because his knees gave way beneath him. Bark, moss, twigs, leaves, pine-needles, ancient slivers, and new-wetted black mould hung to every roughness or crevice in his rain-dressed clothes. He was daubed, mired, crusted, soaked, splattered, from head to foot. In the darkness of the wood he could not see a couple of yards in front. Strange to say, his half-drunken brain guided him by instinct, and the desire to reach Duke's Ferry before morning never left him. That instinct to leave Tuchan and leave it forever had been struggling for years and years with the other instincts of his nature. Now, because it had been so long prisoner, it was become master of everything in his nature. The storm might howl, the rain beat and slash him, his vast strength fail and become almost the weakness of a child, yet now his one, overwhelming idea, his sole necessity was to reach the port before morning; to be safe on some ship before the *old* people could bring him back.

Sometimes, now that he was forced to travel slower, both from loss of strength and the steepness of the road, he looked back over his shoulder. Little did he know that no human feet except his could have crossed the valley on such a night at such a speed. There was nothing around him but the intense blackness of the forest, nothing above but a narrow rift of less deep black. The rain still fell upon his upturned face, but he thought that its violence had passed. He could no longer hear thunder. There was nothing but a vast ancient silence. So he lurched up the rough road, shouting and moaning, and reeling from side to side in the thick darkness.

In the middle of this horrible outcry his distracted mind reverted to the Reverend Simon McManus. "A graund white face to bruise," he said as he left off shouting. "A'd

love to bash it in. Why wad he nae let me sing i' the kirk? Jim lad, ye sing fine. What was the song ye liked sae much to sing? A song about a lassie. Yes, that was it — about a lassie ca'd Jessie. Hoo did it gae noo?"

He made several false starts with the air, as he stood alone there in the pitch black forest path; made noises more like the grunts and howls of a wild beast than sounds proceeding from a human throat. Then the old raucous hum came from his parched lips and the travesty of an ancient song.

"Oh! that love and Oh! that love,
For she is ma darlin',
There isna lass i' the world sae fair
As the lovely Jess Macfarlane."

Jim stopped, and stood swaying in the darkness, the whiskey lapping against the sides of the bottle as he swung to and fro like a restless pachyderm in his native forest.

"As the lovely Jess Macfarlane,"

he continued doubtfully to himself.

"The lovely — Jess — Macfarlane,"

he repeated slowly once more.

"Nae," he said sagely, shaking his vast head, with tangled red locks dripping water into his unseeing eyes. "nae — the name was na Macfarlane at a' — wasna Macfarlane. What was it then? I ken weel — a lassie wi' black eyes and black hair. Jim, man, ye've kissed her."

For a moment or two, in his fluctuating memories, the ideal Jessie came back, she who was to put an end to all his mischances, black-haired and red-stockinged, a beautiful, cherished thing to be saved and, then and forever, all in all to him.

"Jessie! Jessie!" he cried to the surrounding forest, "rin towards me for your life!"

But who had ever run *towards* Jim? He saw limned on the curtain of the darkness, face after face, white, anguished and terrified. Beautiful and proud were the faces till they saw him and then their expression changed. Their pride became fear and then scorn. Their voices rang with the scorn as they cried to him through the night.

"Oh! it's a monster, nae man at a'."

Hundreds and hundreds of these phantoms passed him, it seemed, each with its word of hatred, and at every one Jim quivered from head to heel. He sprang forward to kiss one as he had done in the Manse garden and, then, the black became blank once more. Who had ever run *towards* him?

He took another sip from the whiskey-bottle.

"Damn a' lassies!" he mumbled. "Whuskey's the stuff for a man. Jim, lad, ye're a mon noo. Ye're grown sae fast they had tae turn ye oot on the mountains. There wasna ony hooses big eneuch for ye, Jim. Eh! its a fearfu' nicht. Sae ye had tae rin awa' oot i' the cauld an' the rain."

He took another draught from the bottle which trembled in his hand, and the tears once more came into his eyes.

"Oot i' the cauld an' the rain," he mumbled, staggering and lurching onwards still. "Jim, lad, ye'll dee i' the fearfu' cauld or be struck wi' lightning. They'll find your body a' black i' the morning and naebody will care whether ye're leevin' or deid."

The neat spirit surged through him and Jim was no longer conscious of the reality of things. Pain, sickness, ignominy were all blurred into a shadow of far-away indistinct trouble, trouble that did not matter any longer. Only a subconsciousness, deep-seated unquiet drove him

along, staggering, lurching, and mumbling. Sensations seized him and left him with equal suddenness. Sometimes he wept, sometimes he shouted. There was no coherence, no sequence in his thought. The recollections were all random.

Confused like his steps.

Alternately he caught Jessie in his arms and kissed her and heard once more her words of scorn and loathing.

Misery and joy were companions in his rumbling mind.

That first touch on his knee thrilled him over and over again.

Sometimes he was a child once more, playing with her and Johnny Findlater in the streets, and trying to win the affection of the black-eyed, black-haired Jessie in his puppyish way. Once again he fought with Johnny, saw him triumphantly waving his ha'penny and the white face of the Reverend Simon looking down into his.

Then the miserable school-days brought tears of recollection into his eyes and even now a mad desire to bash somebody. And now it was a sneering face with a fleshy nose looked at him through the dark and rain while a thin biting voice said:

"Weel done, Brobdignag. Weel done, Hippopotamus!"

In his crazy delusions he struck out, and half felt that he had dispelled some reality by his blow, half felt surprise that he had encountered nothing solid.

The memory of his blow on the Dominie's nose, that long, fleshy nose, and the fat soft sensation it gave him, came back and he laughed aloud. It was all long, long ago but the Dominie's nose had never grown straight again.

They would laugh at *him* now — the little boys — just as they had laughed at Jim.

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This must have been his last definite thought. He

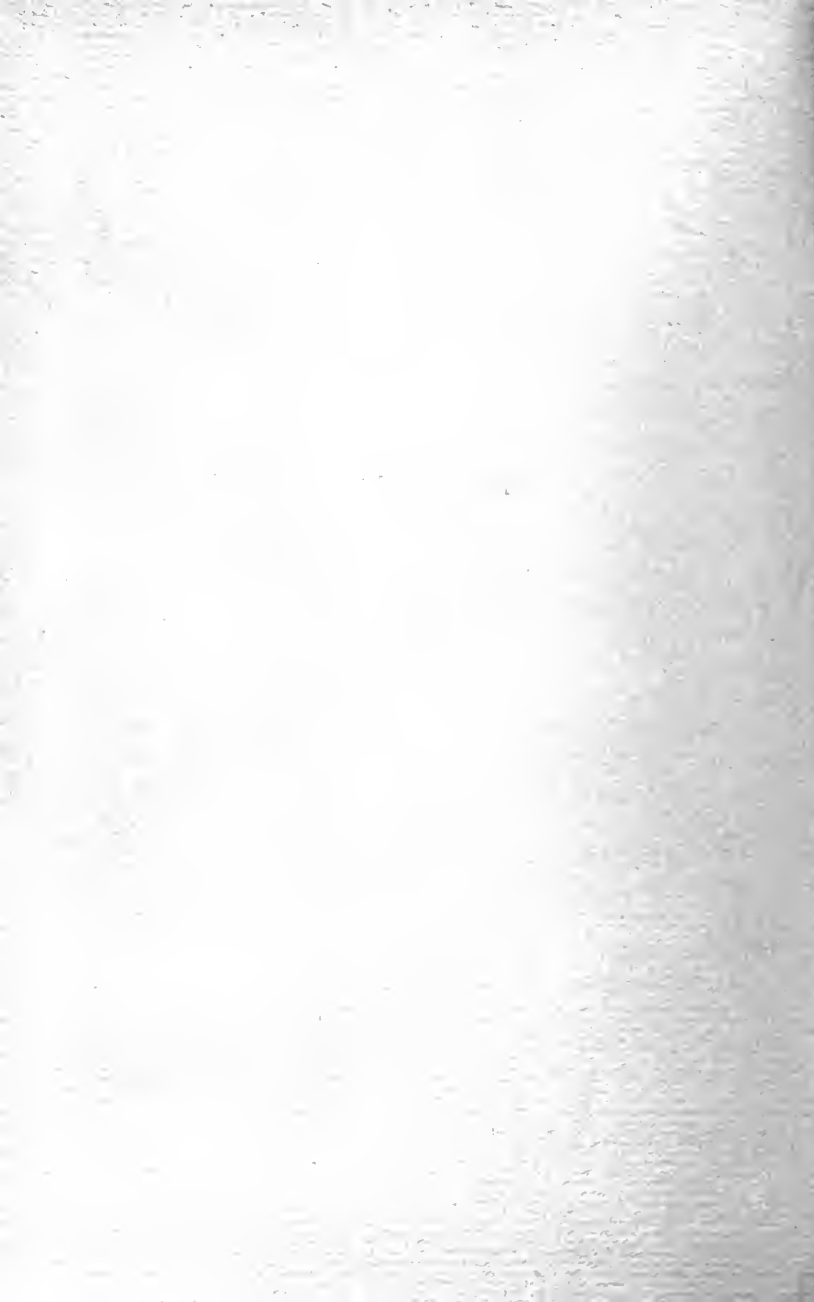
remembers nothing more save emerging at last on to the barren height of the pass, for he had climbed, that night, beyond the fir-forest and almost, it seemed, up to the stars. In the vast vault above him, whither in astonishment he turned his freckled face, they winked and twinkled pure and innumerable in new-washed spaces. The storm had rumbled and circled itself far away by that time, the velvet of the heavens was glittering with triangles, belts, and rivers of diamonds. That solitude of the sky was so infinitely greater than any solitude, through which he had galloped in his mad flight, that, for a while, it struck him motionless.

Then he remembered.

"I maun be in Duke's Ferry before the morn."

He lifted the bottle to his ear. There was a faint tinkle. So, putting it to his lips, he drank it to the last drop and flung it away as far as he could. With tottering knees and stumbling feet Jim began the descent.

PART V



CHAPTER L

“THE ‘Great Tickler’ was last seen moving in a north-westerly direction.”

It is one of the disadvantages of eminence that the movements of a great man are always watched, chronicled, and commented upon. The prime-minister, the empire-maker, the financier can hardly travel a step without the accompaniment of a paragraph in the press.

How subtle must be the joys, for such an one, of travelling incognito.

Wrapped in a huge and luxurious astrakhan coat, like Sir W. S. Gilbert’s “boat-cloak” — an effective disguise — Ambrose Mandeville, the “Great Tickler,” eluded all observation.

It was a part of his whimsical nature to vanish suddenly and leave the vast organisation, of which he was the presiding genius, to the care of subordinates. Without more than a few hours’ preparation, without the least hint to anybody, he would disappear to the ends of the earth and reappear with a treasure.

It was part of his whimsical nature to despatch some queer message *en route*.

On this occasion he sent the telegram that forms the opening lines of this chapter, handsomely tipping the porter who bore it to the office.

Then, luxuriously sinking back into the corner of his first-class carriage, he became once more the unknown adventurer with his way, as it were, still to make in the world, and opened “Beyond Good and Evil.”

These wild journeys without premeditation, as much

flights of fancy as anything else, were the only illusions that he permitted himself.

As he sped at between forty and fifty miles an hour in a north-westerly direction, he closed up the business-department of his Napoleonic brain and turned on all hands in the thinking-department.

There was no one else in the carriage.

The train, in its north-westerly career, roared and rattled, and motionless sat the "Great Tickler," save when with the fingers of his right hand he turned the leaves of his book. A great fleshy beak jutted between the wings of his collar. His big square head was sunk between the square shoulders. There was no light in his brilliant black eyes as he followed Nietzsche step by step.

The power of concentration, which the "Great Tickler" possessed, was preternatural.

He sat with dull, opaque, downward glance, as still as any statue.

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Who was it said, "The world is made for Cæsar"?

Surely such a man as the "Great Tickler" came forth to rule continents.

To sway thousands.

To be Cæsar.

Yes, and truly, though he fled in a north-westerly direction wrapped in the disguise of his sumptuous astrakhan, half on business and half on holiday, Cæsar he was.

His word pulsed across continents. Thousands of men, in either hemisphere, moved at his nod, and tens of thousands, men, women, and children, passed in at the gates of the wonderful white city, which he threw open. Whatever was curious, rare, or beautiful he sought and found. Men hunted for him in the Altai Mountains. In the darkest recesses of Mid-African forests, where

dwarfs run, beast-like, on all fours in the gloomy jungles and build like apes in the tangled lionas, the name of the "Tickler" was known. His fame was wafted along the hot winds that blow over the Amazon and up the Paraguay River, haunt of man-eating fish. His word went forth through Brazilian forests, where the giant Anacondas lie basking, and searched the old polysyllabic treasure-towns of Mexico. The seal-hunters of Kerguelen knew him and those who fish the icy coasts of Labrador. He moved in spirit among the buried cities of Ceylon and the immeasurable distances of the Himalayas.

CHAPTER LI

“COME up, lass!”

Dr. Spens touched the brisk little mare with his whip and she started forward with a swing of her quarters. A rest of five or six hours in Duke's Ferry had well restored her. On the back-seat the silent groom-gardener, Donald, preserved his balance, capitally for a gardener, and clumsily for a groom. It was now a grey, drizzling morning and the east had just begun to lighten with the coming day. As the little mare rattled along the road, which here ran level through the heather, the Doctor could see the backs of the hills stretching sombre and desolate on every hand. Their way ran through a ravine not very deep. For a hundred yards on either side the ground rose almost imperceptibly towards lowish hills, part rock and part short heather mingled with scanty, poor grass.

On their right hand and a little in front of them was a largish loch to which the boulder-strewn hills sloped almost gradually down. A quarter-of-an-hour's driving brought them to it. It was desolate utterly and still, save for the cries of sand-pipers hopping from stone to stone and the lap of water amongst the reeds. They were at the head of the loch and soon they saw it, at its full extent, as it lay among the hills at right angles to their road, sombre and grey at first, and glooming darker and darker till in the distance it seemed to become a black and narrow creek amidst cold and naked mountains half-veiled in the morning mists. There was not a habitation of any sort in view.

“A bit lonely here, Ambrose,” said the Doctor, turning

to a figure, which sat at his side muffled in a large astrakhan collar.

"Lonely! I should just about think it was," returned a voice uncommon brisk and a trifle nasal. "I can't think how you manage to go on year after year. But then you always were a solitary bird. I should let the metaphysical department utterly get the better of me if I lived here for six months."

There was a very slight, hardly noticeable, peculiarity about his pronunciation. His "t's" all seemed to become "d's."

"I am a solitary bird, as you say," replied the Doctor. "Besides a poor man's got to take what he can get."

"I started poor enough, Jehosaphat!" answered his companion.

"Ah! then you had energy enough for twenty. Were quick, determined, tough. How well I remember you in the old days! I've a mental portrait of you plain. So! Face square on the whole; square forehead and square chin; more breadth in front of the ears than behind; a big, jutting, fleshy beak; eyes very bright and black; head rather sunk in the shoulders, they were square too and very broad for your height; chest capacious with plenty of room for heart and lung action; legs short and thick; tendency in later years to corpulence. You haven't altered much, Ambrose. I should have recognised you anywhere."

"Jehosaphat! old boy. As you know, old fellow, I've never been able to afford any illusions about myself or anything else, but your portrait isn't out-and-out flattering from a beauty-man's point of view."

"No, Ambrose," laughed the Doctor, "you never were a beauty-man. Clothes don't sit well on a figure like yours, on the man-of-action's short, thick body. But, then, we doctors, perhaps, Ambrose, you are still doctor

enough to remember, don't look at the outside of the body, except for signs and tokens, so much as the inside. What is a grace to the layman is often a horrible symptom to us. A pink and white complexion may mean tuberculosis; a light eye tendency to hysteria or insanity; a slender graceful body is sometimes a warning to us that the vital functions have not free enough play."

"Oh! oh!" cried the figure in the coat with its slightly nasal voice, "what a point of view!"

"Yes," went on Dr. Spens firmly, "we doctors have a different valuation to the unlearned. But we have compensation for what we lose, as always happens in this life. We learn to think beautiful what the layman thinks ugly. In some ways," he added, with the touch of gentle humour which was one of his charms, "you were the handsomest man I ever knew."

"Oh! oh! oh!" cried his companion again.

"How I envied you," continued the Doctor in a state of mild ecstasy, "those magnificent lungs which can have had no trouble in well oxygenising your blood; that heart, which pumped it to every part of your body, tumultuously, regularly, with the force of a great engine. I sometimes, in my medical student days, thought I would like to make a post-mortem on you just for the pleasure of seeing how you were fixed in that chest-cavity. Ah! I was a real enthusiast in those days. Such splendid arrangements are never seen except in a short, thick body, like yours, which the world calls ugly. The world likes those huge, fair men with slow pulses and sleepy movements. They're no good, Ambrose. Their hearts can't keep it up — after forty, anyway. The blood all goes to feeding the remote extremities of the body. It hardly reaches their brains. Give me the swift, mad tumult of the short man's circulation and the big stomach, set well in between the thighs, which shows a good digestion and a capacity for

always attaining nourishment. That keeps the nerves sound and the brain clear, gives the Napoleonic brain-in-compartments organisation. Give me, Ambrose, the short-legged, short-necked, short-tempered man. He gets on."

"Short-legged! short-necked!! short-tempered!!" exclaimed the man whom the Doctor called Ambrose. "That's me to a tick. I know it. But — it does sound *rather* brutal. You put things uncompromisingly, Spens. Living in the wilds, I suppose. In spite of my magnificent lungs, my superb heart, and my brain-in-compartments, I feel a strange, wild longing to be one of the beautiful, blond men, to have a fascinating exterior. Confound my short, thick neck, my bull-neck! What business has my vertebral column to be fixed like that? I've cut the medical profession. I resent being admired exclusively by experts. Your ideas of beauty, Ambrose, are fantastic and unnatural. I yearn once more after the schoolroom hero type, the beloved of pretty little girls. The longings of my early days surge back upon me."

"The best is never appreciated except by the few, and, Ambrose, you know that as well as I do," said Dr. Spens philosophically.

"Perhaps," replied the other, "but then you forget my profession in your valuations. What would become of me, if all the world were built of a pattern? Jehosaphat! I should look a goat now, I don't think."

"Oh!" replied the Doctor with something of a shudder. "Freaks! What a trade! Bugh!"

"There aint much in that. Freaks aint worse than tumours an' midwifery. It's a jolly fine trade. You bet your life.

The Doctor looked with an air of half-amusement, half-admiration at his friend.

"How did you think of such a thing?" he cried.

"Think of it! It's a fine trade, a first-class trade,

a noble trade. I have a jolly good time. My freaks have a jolly good time. Somebody's got to look after the freaks in this world. They've got a right to live like anyone else, I take it. Then there's all the excitement. Travelling — capitals of Europe — nobs of all kinds — crowned heads sometimes! A king gave me this."

A face that tallied somewhat with the Doctor's description came out of the astrakhan collar, that sumptuous ruff of curling black wool which encircled the bull neck, a face with piercing black eyes and a jutting, fleshy nose. No wonder the owner snuffled. The face was Jewish to the last hair in the eyebrows.

"Not a bad diamond, eh?"

He pulled the collar open in front.

In his expansive tie sparkled a brilliant of the first lustre.

"No, old boy! There aint any flies on my job. Except in moments of irritation I don't regret my short neck and my short temper and my short legs if, as you say, they have helped me on. Unlike most of my people I'm a bit of a metaphysician and transcendentalist. Long ago I saw like you the folly of the world, eh? But after all it's the only one we've got and we may as well make the most of it — think, if we can, that good food, good clothes, good wine etc., are realities. I've got a metaphysical department in my brain but I resolutely shut it off. No, my job's all right. I'm worth a bit now. 'Course, I'm disappointed sometimes."

"The seal, eh?"

"Confound that seal! All the way to a damned little stink-port like Duke's Ferry to look at a dead seal. Would ha' been a bit of a draw, tho' — two heads! eight flippers! ! Mandeville's Circus wants something new. Novelty's what brings 'em in thousands. Novelty and ads. Don't let the public go to sleep. That's my motto. Good old

B. P., tickle 'em up! Good old sausage eaters, tickle 'em up! Good old froggies, tickle 'em up. See?"

Dr. Spens, in spite of his natural sobriety, could not help laughing. There was something so kindly and jovial about Ambrose Mandeville's vulgarity. His scientific snuffles seemed to give a certain distinction to his remarks and he conveyed the impression of extracting all the joy possible out of life by his immense energy and love of being. His tie was so many-coloured, his astrakhan collar so immense, his tie-pin so dazzling, his voice so rich and resonant, his vitality so immeasurable that he inspired the Doctor with the glory of his existence, even though Mandeville's trade might not, in cold speculation, seem to have anything very glorious about it. It was one thing, however, to talk about it yourself, another to hear him talk about it. What Dr. Spens said was true beyond doubt. His was a perfect organisation. Not an ounce of blood, not a nerve, not a cell was wasted.

That brain had been so wonderfully organised that he could turn it onto or shut it off from any subject just as he wished. He wrestled with all forms of thought but no thinking interfered with his capacity for enormous, endless, creative, practical work.

Imagination of many kinds he had, but not that which makes the man a slave even though it produces things of beauty or intense concentrated thought.

Mandeville deliberately used all his power for practical work.

And it was the life and colour which he put into his work that made it seem so fine.

"I should never have made a good 'Tickler,'" said Dr. Spens, half regretfully. "I had my battle with the world and lost it — lost it badly. How long ago it seems now! When I first came here I had the haunting feeling, occasionally, that I ought to be doing something in the world,

making a name for myself in fact instead of doing homely, unobtrusive work in Tuchan. But it passed away after two or three years. And now, thank Heaven, I'm all right where I am. Even though I get depressed sometimes, I comfort myself with the thought that we can all find our little jobs in the world. I'm out of touch with the latest discoveries, of course. If there's anything crucial I send the patient at my own expense to Glasgow."

"Funny how we used to be such pals, wasn't it?" said Mandeville, once more sinking into his astrakhan collar. He seemed to revel in its warmth and comfort like a school-boy. He had the faculty of finding an elemental joy in luxury. Dr. Spens made little figures with his whip, thoughtfully, and looked between the mare's ears.

The rich and resonant voice of Ambrose Mandeville recalled old friendships and merry laughter, which his gentle and sensitive nature had loved, recalled the old days and the old world of ambition and energy to which he had said such a distant good-bye.

"People come in and out of one's life," continued Mandeville, "and it doesn't seem very long since we were at the hospital together, but Jehosaphat I'm glad to see you again, old boy. I don't care a damn about my two-headed seal. I'd lose fifty of 'em for the pleasure of having seen you."

Mandeville meant what he said and, considering his profession, his words showed him to have a handsome and generous mind. The Doctor left off making little circles with his whip and touched the mare with the lash. She sprang forward willingly and the sudden movement saved him the necessity of saying anything. As we already know, he was a particularly shy, reserved, and delicately strung person.

No, he could never have been a "Tickler" like Mandeville. The latter, however, knew quite well that the Doctor was glad to see him again. The dim grey of the

morning grew lighter and lighter every moment. It was cold.

Mandeville shivered and grumbled, "You're a tough old nut, anyway. I suppose you're used to getting up in the early morning. As for me, it's one of the few things I really abominate. I can just do it, that's all. Lucky I never became a doctor, isn't it?"

"You'd have got used to it," replied Spens.

"Never," replied Mandeville, sinking into his astrakhan with a luxurious moan. "How ever many more miles is it to your house, old cock?"

The mare had been trotting briskly during their conversation, and now the road began to climb distinctly uphill. They were almost at the end of the loch along which they had been driving, and beyond it they could see thick woods of firs climbing up into the mists.

"Some miles yet, I fear," replied the Doctor. "We are now almost at the foot of the Ballandarroch Pass. In a mile or two more we shall really have to begin to climb. There seems to have been a lot of rain here last night. The roads are getting perfectly abominable. Didn't you hear thunder? I did. Just after I went to bed. I suppose the storm circled off here."

"We shall have a job through the Pass, then, but you will be well rewarded when we arrive."

The morning mist blew aside for a moment and the "Tickler" saw the mountain road winding high above through the forests that clothed the great bases of More and Moich. It was a long, long drive, even though his old friend the Doctor had promised him a spectacle out of the ordinary at the end of it. And he *did* hate getting up early in the morning. Wherever he happened to be and whatever he happened to be doing he made it a rule never to get up before the sun rose. This morning he had been up three hours before it.

"We'll buck along," said Mandeville. "I want a snooze before I see this surprise packet of yours. I believe it's all a gag."

"You're an unbelieving —"

"Jew. Don't rub it in, old cock! I can't help it."

Spens laughed.

"By the way," he said, "you never told me why you chucked doctoring. You were so keen on it when I left the hospital."

"Yes, I was keen enough on it when I didn't know anything about the game," replied Mandeville. "I kept my eyes open though, and very soon saw that I should never do any good."

"Why? You'd brains."

"Brains!" cried Mandeville in a voice of scorn. "My brain-in-compartments wasn't any good to me in the profession nor my magnificent heart or my superb lungs either. Brains indeed! Brains aren't what the ladies want. What they want is a doc with nice grey English eyes and curly fair hair. Makes 'em feel comfortable. They've no use for a fat Jew who snuffles through his nose when he's gammoning 'em, even if he has a magnificent heart and superb lungs and a brain-in-compartments. No, Spens, decidedly it isn't brains that the ladies want. For a fashionable doc grey eyes and gammon is the *only* ticket. Nature or Fate, which made me a Jew and gave me these short legs and this bull-neck and this short square body, didn't intend me to make my fortune that way, and, as I wanted to make a fortune, I chucked it. There are two things a good Jew never uses on himself — gammon and bacon. Moses forbade us to eat bacon and, as for gammon, we gammon other people but we don't gammon ourselves. We've had too much black hole and toothdrawing for that. We just look at ourselves in the worst possible light and then start on to make the best of ourselves. See?"

"I do — and not a bad plan either. But why did you take up your — ahem — Tickling business?"

The magnetism of Mandeville was upon him.

"Oh! they brought the bearded woman from Barnet and Bagguley's World's Fair to have an operation at the hospital one day," replied Mandeville, "and when I saw her on the operating table with her great beard down to her knees, I don't know why, the inspiration came to me in a moment, like all true inspirations."

"So you chucked the hospital?"

"Chuck'd the hospital and —"

CHAPTER LII

AT that moment the little mare reared up between the shafts till she stood almost on her hind legs, and then started off at a headlong gallop down the road, depositing Donald, the groom-gardener, behind her. True to his taciturnity, he alighted without a word. The Doctor had all his work to keep the animal straight. The road here, cut out of a steep slope declining towards the loch, was exceptionally narrow, and a swerve to right or left would have landed the dogcart either in the water or up against a six-foot bank. In either case a severe spill would have been inevitable and for a moment or two Spens was uncertain whether he could avoid an accident. Before getting hold of the mare's head, however, he had seen a gigantic, tattered figure rise from a strip of grass between the loch and the road, utter a weird cry, half-moan and half-growl, and grab with an enormous hand at the mare's head. For several hundred yards they pelted down the road, swaying, jerking, bumping, and clattering in the slushy surface of mud and stones.

The Doctor was too much occupied in trying to stop the runaway to pay much attention to anything else. When, at last, he succeeded in bringing her to a standstill, he turned round to Mandeville and found him, as it were, a totally different being. He had emerged from his somnolent attitude in the astrakhan collar. His black eyes sparkled and his nostrils in the curving Semitic nose dilated at the sniff of an adventure.

"Jehosaphat, Spens!" he cried. "What on earth was that?"

"What did you think you saw?" asked the Doctor.

"What I thought I saw was a blessed giant," replied Mandeville, the instinct of the "Tickler" awakening strongly in him, "a blessed giant, seven feet high if he was an inch. But the thing's absurd. What did you think you saw, Spens?"

The Doctor remained silent for a moment or two. The little mare was fidgeting with cocked ears and steaming flanks.

"There's only one," he began, and then said half to himself, "The thing is absurd. I left him in bed with pneumonia, not a bad attack, but still an attack."

"What are you muttering about?" asked Mandeville, "Do you know anything about this apparition? Out with it, if you do!"

"Maybe I do and maybe I don't," replied the Doctor, with due caution. "Mandeville, just get down and turn Grizel's head. We must go back and find Donald. I expect he dropped off when we bolted."

"Right!" replied Mandeville, hopping down in his long astrakhan coat. "Easy, my gal, Uncle's not angry. Gently does it."

He hopped in again and the mare retraced her footsteps at a more moderate pace, even though she jumped about in spite of the Doctor's gentle and practised hand.

"We mustn't lose our Donald, of course. And, perhaps," the insinuating gleam of the accomplished "Tickler" shone in his eyes, "perhaps we might try and find that other feller. I don't know what *he* wanted, but I know I should like *him*. He'd be worth a whole catch of two-headed seals."

Dr. Spens drove on in silence, a frown of perplexity on his forehead.

"You bit of old bedrock," cried Mandeville, "I believe you know more than you'll say. Hulloo, isn't this Donald?"

A muddy figure came running down the road to meet them.

"All right, Donald?" asked his master laconically. Donald touched his hat.

"No bones broken?"

Donald touched his hat again.

"Very well, get up behind, then."

Donald touched his hat a third time.

"I say," began the "Tickler" eagerly, but Donald touched his hat a fourth time and got up behind as commanded by his master. "Aren't you going to —?" started the accomplished "Tickler" again, turning to the Doctor. One look at the Doctor sufficed and he stopped talking. Spens' face was so stern set that even the volatile and irrepressible Mandeville, with his Jewish *flair* for a good thing, was silenced when he saw that face. He understood that this was a case of the Doctor's business and moreover he suddenly understood, also, why Spens had remained seventeen years in a remote Scotch village. The world-famous Mandeville of Mandeville's Circus had, perhaps, if we dare say it, been thinking his old friend rather a stick-in-the-mud, but now his respect for the Doctor increased twenty-fold. He knew a man when he saw one (ten years' management of a large business had taught him that), and he saw that, although poor and unknown, his old friend was a man. Mandeville was disciplinarian enough to know that he must obey. As the Doctor said no word they splashed along through the mud in silence. In a moment or two they saw a figure lying on the road. Grizel pricked up her ears again.

"Whoa!" said the Doctor pulling up the little mare.

"Donald! Come and hold her head."

The silent Donald touched his hat a fifth time and stood, as commanded, like a statue at the mare's head.

"Mandeville," said the Doctor, in a short, sharp voice

very different from his usual sober and rather gentle tones, "I think this is a patient of mine. The case may be very serious. I shall need your assistance."

"Right," replied the accomplished "Tickler." Anything new was in the way of an adventure for him. The two stepped out of the trap and approached the figure lying in the road. It was face downwards. The coat and trousers were all torn, mud-be-spattered, covered with little twigs and brushes of heather. The rain had drenched them and begun to dry upon them, though the clothes, if such uncouth and shapeless coverings could be called clothes, were still clinging damp. The great hands, like shoulders-of-mutton, and inches of brown arm stuck out of the sleeves, and the flaming red head seemed almost fiery enough to scorch up a puddle of water, near which it was reposing. There appeared yards and yards of the figure lying in the road.

"Jehosaphat!" cried Ambrose Mandeville. "It *is* a giant. What's the matter with him, Spens? Is he dead? Just like my cursed luck this week, if he is."

"It'll be marvellous, if he isn't," replied the Doctor. "Come on, Mandeville. This isn't a time for talking. We must get him into the trap somehow. Turn him over gently. You take his feet. I'll take his head."

Mandeville was, for his height or *any* height, exceptionally strong; the Doctor, toughened by mountain air and simple living, no weakling. Yet how they groaned, struggled, heaved, and panted before they could raise the inanimate Jim! At last they lifted the huge figure. He hung a dead weight in their arms and his face was deathly white where it could be seen amid all the mud which covered it.

"You can bring the trap up now, Donald," said the Doctor. Grizel danced a bit at the sight of the huge red-headed burden they bore, but somehow or other they man-

aged to hoist Jim into the front seat. He had never moved a muscle or opened an eyelid.

"I'm afraid his goose is cooked," said Mandeville disconsolately as he surveyed the unconscious Giganticulus. "Oh! if only I had a yard measure. But I'm certain he must be all right. He must be over the standard size."

In spite of the gravity of the case, Mandeville's feelings, the feelings of the entomologist when he finds a rare specimen, or the book-collector when he lights on a priceless folio, ran away with him. Even as the aforesaid book-collector measures the height of a volume, so the accomplished "Tickler" of the B. P. mentally sized up the huge jetsam of the road.

"Coat, Ambrose!" said the Doctor with hand outstretched and his eyes still on Jim.

"Coat?" queried Mandeville vaguely.

"Yes, yes, your coat," answered Spens, a trifle impatiently. "Your astrakhan's just the thing to keep the boy warm. There's not much chance of saving his life, but we must take all the chances there are.

"I should just about think we must," echoed Mandeville fervently. "Coat! coat! coat by all means! Jehosaphat! I'm glad I brought it."

He stripped himself of the costly and splendid garment, and together they wrapped it round the shoulders of the unconscious Jim. The Doctor bound his own modest ulster round the sick boy's knees.

"Climb up, Mandeville, climb up behind!" said the Doctor briskly, "and hold the boy's shoulders to prevent him slipping. I'll sit in front and keep him as cosy and comfortable as I can while I drive. Donald, you come along as quickly as possible."

In spite of the sucking, viscous mud, enough to wrench ligament or tendon if she stepped in a hole, Dr. Spens drove his little mare as fast as he could, while Mandeville half-

stood and half-knelt at the back of the dogcart, holding Jim's shoulders as directed. So curiously constituted is human nature that although before he had felt cold in his astrakhan coat, now when he was without it and *with* this excitement, the chill of the morning air remained absolutely unnoticed.

"Now, Doctor," he said as he leant over his friend's shoulder, "perhaps you will have the goodness to tell me who and what this creature is."

"I'll tell you one thing he is," replied Spens. "He's drunk in addition to having pneumonia. His breath reeks of whiskey."

"If he's been running about all night in that storm with pneumonia upon him, he must have been either drunk or mad."

"The whiskey may just have given him a chance," said Dr. Spens thoughtfully.

"Once again, who and what is he?" asked Ambrose Mandeville. "You called him a boy just now."

"You came with me to see a phenomenon," replied Spens. "When you told me you were *the* Mandeville of Mandeville's Circus, my old hospital friend, I thought you might like to see it. Well, this *is* the phenomenon."

"By Jove — so you brought me along to see him. I'm awfully obliged, old chap. I owe you a debt that I believe I shall never be fully able to repay. He *is* a phenomenon and no mistake. But how does he come to be in this deplorable condition?"

"Seventeen years ago I helped to bring this young scoundrel into the world."

"Seventeen! only seventeen!" cried Mandeville with the astonishment of all those who saw Jim for the first time.

"That's so," answered the Doctor. "I helped to bring him into the world and still remember what a lot of trouble

he gave. I believe I prophesied trouble with him then. He was by far the biggest baby I've ever seen and, on the whole, it's best to be ordinary if one wishes to be happy. Poor Jim Macdonald has found this out. He's been in one scrape after another for the last five or six years. It was only yesterday morning that I offered to try and do something for him if he liked to leave Tuchan and have a shy at the luck elsewhere."

Mandeville was silent. His face looked as if the problem-department in his brain was working overtime: his eyes were dull-opaque, downcast instead of flashing and brilliant. That was his appearance in moments of concentration.

"What are his parents?" he asked at length.

"Father works in the Quarries here."

"He's only seventeen you say. Then, by Almighty Jove, he ought to grow some more. My poor old friend Tung Pu grew till he was twenty-two years old, grew till he became the world's tallest man. Our friend ought certainly to grow some more."

"Ought to, if he pulls through," answered the Doctor laconically. "There's a growing look about him still. His chances of recovery aren't, however, very great, I fear."

"H'm-m," muttered Mandeville. "He's got pneumonia, you say."

"I left him in bed with it yesterday. Caught a cold working in the Quarries, I suppose. These silly fellows get overheated, it's been fearfully hot this week, and then sit down in their shirts to cool. Result, of course, pneumonia."

"Spens!" said Mandeville, "I beg to inform you that the tallest man in the world, at the present moment, is only seven feet six, and so —"

"Well!"

"This boy's simply got to pull through."

"I'm not in the habit of neglecting my patients," replied the Doctor with aggravating calm.

"Of course you're not," cried Mandeville, his less restrained nature boiling over, "but I say," in his excitement his Jewish speech became more and more marked, "you know this is a big thing, Doctor. It's going to be a boom. A cinch. A regular gilt-edged investment. One doesn't find giants of seventeen years old, who are over seven feet high, every day. The boy *must* live."

"I'll do my best," said Spens in his usual calm and gentle voice.

"Of course you will, old chap," cried Mandeville. "I don't doubt it for an instant, but —"

"Don't move about so or you'll shake the patient."

"Oh! confound you, Spens," cried the great Ambrose violently. "What a fellow you are. Doesn't your common sense tell you that you can trust me to look after him? Why, he'll be worth hundreds and hundreds to me. There hasn't been a decent-sized giant since old Tung Pu popped off the hooks. Puny, pretentious, made-up things they've been, one and all. I had hopes when I saw our red-headed friend at first. Then I thought he'd done growing. But now I hear he's only seventeen and might have nearly another five years' growth, Jehosaphat! I *can't, can't, can't* think of his dying. Spens, the boy *must* live!"

"We will do our best," said the Doctor, taking a pull on Grizel and compassion on Mandeville's impatience. "But I warn you that it will be touch and go. Poor Jim!"

"He will be lucky Jim, if he recovers."

"If?" said Spens in a low, sad voice. "Ambrose, is your world made of 'ifs' after all?"

"No, dear old boy, of course not," answered the "Tickler" in rather a shamefaced way, "but yet I can see it on the hoardings already. 'The Scotch Giant — Mandeville's

latest attraction.' Gad — *can't* I see it, and the people all craning their necks, and the crowd at the turnstiles! It will be a boom. The B. P. want tickling just at this moment. They're tired to death of Sarah Muggins, the Bearded Woman, fine golden beard though she's got, and the Lilliputian Troupe, and the Dog-faced Man. I've done my best by letting them write articles in magazines and by arranging with the R. C.'s for an account of the conversion of Sarah Muggins, but the game is getting slow. We want a *Novelty* at Mandeville's Circus and, if this boy lives, as he must and shall, by God! we've got it. The Performing Seals were all very well in their way, but what would they be to a Scotch Giant? He shall wear tartans and a bonnet. Jehosaphat! can't I see him! Can't I hear the ladies applauding as he comes into the ring and the kids' shouting! Spens, I tell you this boy *must* live."

Dr. Spens could not help smiling once more. Twenty years in a remote region of Scotland had seen him grow steadier continually and continually soberer, had seen his sandy hair turn the whity colour that all sandy hair does with age. Scarcely an emotion had marked all this passage of time. Everyone took him as a matter-of-course and he too had long ago begun to take as a matter of course, everyone and everything.

Mandeville's outcries woke chords in him that had slumbered for twenty dreamless, almost cowardly years.

"Still the same exuberant and imaginative chap, Ambrose," he said even more indulgently than usual. "You seem the first human being I have come across for half a lifetime — the concentrated essence of all humanity's activity. Perhaps you never knew what it was to go on doing things simply because it was your duty or there was nothing else to do. You, Mandeville, bring me a breath of the romance of effort. You make me understand the joy of doing things because they are delightful, not because they must

be done. You have proved strong enough to retain all your energies and enthusiasms undiminished. O your strength! How a weak fellow like me covets it! Ambrose, you remind me of the times of chivalry."

"I don't know about that, old man," replied Mandeville, arranging his fur coat solicitously round Jim's shoulders. "As far as I remember we Jews didn't have much of a time in the age of chivalry. It was that blessed old black-hole and tooth-drawing epoch. But, you are right. I couldn't live in a poke-away place like this (not that the scenery isn't picturesque) alleviating the rheumatism of old ladies and helping young ones to increase the population. I'm a hustler. I must go on till I drop or bust. I love fighting. Perhaps Mandeville's Circus is only symbolic. As you've told me, I have superb lungs, a magnified heart, a bull-neck, and a brain-in-compartments. I know how to make use of my opportunities, thanks to the kindly fate that fashioned me to what I am. Here, in my fur coat, is an immense opportunity. This Scotch boy *must* live."

"Well, Ambrose," replied the Doctor, letting his mare slow into a walk, "I won't deny that you've inspired me. I'm almost ashamed of my old pithless resignation."

"Oh! oh! What rot you are talking, my dear fellow!" cried the "Tickler" with a kindly look in his brilliant black eyes. "Do you not suppose, yes *know* that there is any amount of the admirable in you? I, Ambrose Mandeville, admire you. I admire beyond all words anyone who can tolerate the humdrum for ten minutes, let alone twenty years. Our little pill of a world is only spun round on its axis by the deification of the humdrum. Remember the Great Duke's words: 'There is nothing in the world really worth getting. Yet everyone can do their duty.' What a sublime utterance!"

"I hope I have always done my duty," replied the Doctor, "but for many years I've gone on doctoring because there

was nothing left to do except doctor. Somehow or other you have vitalised me afresh. I feel determined to save this boy—for you perhaps, perhaps for himself. The young monster has had a bad name here. I don't know how much foundation there is in it. But, as I said before, if you live among ordinary people, it's best to be ordinary yourself. That's why I've become such a disgracefully, horribly ordinary person. I sometimes think that a country doctor must be the most ordinary person in creation. Do you know that for years and years those twin mountains, between which we are even now climbing, have been an impassable barrier between me and the world? Just looking at them morning, noon, and night has reconciled me to, possibly, the most humdrum life on earth. Well, well! One adapts oneself to one's environment. There's more of the chameleon, it seems to me, than of any other creature in human beings. We call it making the best of things."

CHAPTER LIII

IT was noon before they arrived at the Doctor's cottage, delayed by the havoc which the great storm had wrought on the mountain roads. Jim was still unconscious, though once or twice during their journey he had opened his eyes and moaned feebly.

In spite of his anxiety the "Tickler" had with accomplished eye assimilated all the wild and romantic scenery of Jim's birthplace and sketched into his notebook the intended background for the advertisement of the Scotch Giant. His was a robust and sanguine nature which never sanctioned the thought of defeat. Such are the natures which perform the apparently incredible.

It was certainly he, or nobody, who could drag Jim back from his fearful relapse not so much by his half-forgotten medical knowledge as by his own unexampled vitality.

The old housekeeper, something shaken, cried out when she saw the red-haired burden in the dogcart.

But the "Tickler" allowed her no time for more than that one shriek.

He, as it were, took complete possession of her, rounded her up, chivied her upstairs and down, set her warming blankets and filling hot-water bottles, imbued her even with some of his own spirit of adventure and continual success. If it was Dr. Spens who gave the definite orders, it was the exuberant, active, all-compelling "Tickler" who had them carried out with the despatch of ordered fury.

Jim's parents were summoned to the Doctor's house.

The "Tickler" received them, bewildered Euphemia, hurried Alexander out of his ordinary deliberation, made Jim entirely his own before the village couple had even a dim comprehension what had happened.

The next day he drove the mare into Duke's Ferry and came back with a nurse.

The day after he interviewed the Reverend Simon and found that worthy in many-worded rage at the translation of Jim. The exotic "Tickler" in no way conduced to his greater calm.

"But — but — but —" he spluttered pompously, "it is a young criminal, Mr. — ah — Mandeville."

"On the contrary, it is a magnificent young giant," replied the "Tickler" and, seeing the black furrows knitted on the Reverend Simon's square forehead, then tried his gentlest arts of persuasion, the silken scabbard that hides the steel. "After all," he went on, "granted that Jim has injured the bull, seriously frightened a young lady, granted the case is somewhat mysterious, no useful end will be served by pushing it further. The bull is dead, the young lady gone away, the culprit in a perilous condition. If he recovers, he has his entry to the world's stage open to him. Why, my dear and reverend Sir, put an obstacle in his way? Mind you, I don't believe you really have a case. There is more to be said for Jim than you think and also half the bull's price for Mr. Thomson if he will take it."

And so, hearkening to the "Tickler's" honeyed but decisive words, the Reverend Simon resolved not to be vindictive.

So much was settled, but Jim's life was still the really important thing.

"This isn't to be a case of thinking about money," said Mandeville again and again to Spens. "My purse, as they say in the old romances, is at your disposal. My

copper-top, my huge, lonely, magnificent, troublesome ginger-head, must be saved, whatever the cost. It isn't like spending money without getting a return. If we can save him between us, this young giant's going to be a big thing. He's worth a hundred pound an inch. By God! he's gilt-edged — good enough security for a maiden aunt. I won't have a specialist from London. I'll leave him to you, old pal. It shall be you and I who will save him."

"And, by God, Mandeville, we *will* save him!" cried the Doctor, raised at last to a pitch of enthusiasm by the fiery and optimistic words of the famous "Tickler" of the B. P.

"Hurrah!" cried Mandeville.

"Hurrah!" echoed Spens, for the moment forgetting that his patient lay in an agonising crisis upstairs.

"Hurrah!" cried the old housekeeper, now in the grip of enthusiasm and excitement. "Hurrah!" In that small house there were three people, beside the trained nurse hired from Duke's Ferry, devoted to the task of saving our Jim's life. . . .

The "Great Tickler" had moved in a "north-westerly" direction and his habitual good fortune — the good-fortune that always attends tireless, objective energy, and persons with short necks, short legs, short tempers, and a magnificent circulation — had not deserted him. For, by now, there was a distinct improvement in the young giant's condition. His fever was less; he slept naturally for some hours at night; and, in the words of the medical profession, took nourishment more freely. So stirred was Mandeville by the undoubted recovery of James that he let a whole fortnight pass without sending one single communication to his headquarters.

Such behaviour was unprecedented. But then Jim Macdonald was unprecedented too.

Meanwhile the wires flashed and vibrated over every

country in Europe, and ocean-going ships, harbour-officers, and coast-detectives were visited with the same ceaseless question. Had anyone seen a short, thickset, hook-nosed gentleman, the celebrated Ambrose Mandeville? Had such an one been noted on their railway-platforms? walked their decks? arrived, disguised or otherwise, in their ports?

And always to the ceaseless queries came back the answer, "No."

Meanwhile, in the "Tickler's" office, the correspondence accumulated in such portentous heaps that it seemed as if nothing but an outbreak of fire could deal with it satisfactorily. The letters bore the stamps of almost every country in the world, the postmarks of almost every great city.

And to all, the secretaries could only answer, "Wait." Nothing was known about the "Great Tickler" except that he had moved in a north-westerly direction, on business or pleasure, *vide* telegram, if genuine. A whole little world was dislocated.

A formidable posse of secretaries distracted.

And all this time, with his chin in his hand and his flashing black eyes bent on a white and freckled face, he sat by Jim's bedside — heedless of everything till the new Scotch Giant was out of danger.

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But eminence has its disadvantage. The "Tickler" could not lie hidden long. An enterprising Scotch reporter had noticed his well-marked features in Glasgow and at length, with considerable exercise of ingenuity and patience, tracked him to Tuchan. So one evening a tremendous panting was heard from the windows of the sick-room and a big automobile drew up in front of the Doctor's house.

"I am discovered," cried Mandeville dramatically, "and, confound me, Spens, if I hadn't forgotten Mandeville's

Circus completely and let it go to rack and ruin and all because of my carrotty-haired monster. Heaven knows what quantities of money I may not have lost by my extraordinary behaviour! But never mind! It was worth it—certainly worth it. If Jim recovers, and by Jehoshaphat, I'm sure he will, he's picking up every day now, if he recovers, he'll pay me back my losses and bring me a fortune to boot. Oh! marvellous Jim, most astounding of human beings on whom these two eyes have ever lighted, O red-haired Immensity (that hair is worth a thousand a year in itself), with regret I leave you! See, my dear Spens, that he has everything he needs, I have left a cheque for a hundred in your consulting-room, and wire me *at once* if anything goes wrong. We will have the best London specialist down in that case. But rats! It will be all right, I know. I left our friend Jim to you in the beginning, Spens, and, you see, I didn't misplace my trust. I know a man when I see one and I know when I've got a good pal. I haven't managed a big circus for nothing. Better a pal who's interested in the job than a specialist who isn't. I'm still Doctor enough to know that. The will is the chief thing, isn't it, Spens, in anything except surgical cases.

"Au reservoir, old chap, and for your invaluable assistance best thanks. Keep-a-running! Ta-ta! I must off it."

CHAPTER LIV

IT might add to the excitement of the story if I could assert with truth that Jim had two or three, or even one fearful relapse during which he hung over the abyss suspended by a thread.

But such a statement would *not* be the truth. The "Tickler" had infused such energy into his nurses and perhaps (for who can be certain about such a thing?) even into the unconscious Jim, that once on the road to recovery, he never turned back.

His illness can be easily and shortly described. Day after day, week after week, till weeks grew to months, he lay in the Doctor's cottage, gradually getting a little longer and a little stronger.

When he had recovered his senses he spoke little, nor did he perhaps think very much. He was too weak to do more than watch the good day growing, blazing, and dying away through the window of his room; too helpless to wish for anything more than a comfortable bed and regular meals. Taking it one way and another he devoured a huge bulk of food. The peace of his surroundings and his own weakness had wiped away all the old morbid horror of a super-growth. His vitality had been too much exhausted for him to feel anything very deeply or remember anything much. And now at last the Doctor judged it time to prepare Jim for the strange fate that presently awaited him.

"Jim, my boy," said he, "how would you like to see the world? You know I have always taken an interest in you, and now I have discovered an old friend who takes an even bigger interest in you than I do."

"Wha's he?" said Jim in the uncompromising manner of a son of the soil.

"A very old friend of mine called Mr. Mandeville," answered the Doctor. "He was with me when we picked you up on the road and helped to bring you back to my house."

"An' then?" said Jim, for the Doctor was tacking backwards and forwards in his speech in rather a ludicrous manner and undecidedly humming and hawing. The truth is that, having embarked on the explanation, he found it a trifle awkward to tell a fellow-mortal, even if it was only Jim, that he was to be carried off in a month or two as an exhibit in a circus. The glamour leant to the strange hegira of Jim by the "Tickler's" presence had a little faded since he departed and the Doctor had fallen back into the matter-of-course and conventional. His gentle face grew quite agitated as he sought for a form of words which would neither hurt Jim's feelings nor falsify the truth.

"He's rather a queer character, an eccentric, Jim, though undoubtedly something of a genius," he continued at last (which was certainly true, though the rude Jim had no conception of the word's meaning), "and he was much struck — yes, really astonished and delighted at your — um — ah — unusual size."

Jim could not help wincing and his change of countenance did not escape Spens, who thereupon proceeded more gingerly than ever, shirking the point of his explanation in the weakest-minded way.

"He was so delighted with you, Jim, that as soon as you're strong again, he wants to take you to London. I — I — do hope you'll go with him, Jim. It's a great chance — a very great chance —" He fled and Jim was left to ponder.

.

At Mandeville's request the Doctor had written him a

bulletin every day, saying that James was now rapidly recovering his strength and putting on those inches that were as good as banknotes to the ambitious "Tickler."

"You think our friend will reach eight feet?" asked the "Tickler" among other things. "London is rife with rumours of a new sensation."

"Easily," replied Spens by return of post, for in such a correspondence he was prompt. "I have not measured him, but the bed seems to grow shorter and shorter for him every day. There is no doubt that his illness, as is often the case, has made him grow beyond all knowledge. I am convinced that you would now be staggered by his appearance. . . ."

"Famous! — Famous! — Famous!" the answer came. Let me know at once the day he reaches eight feet and I will come down. Things could not go better. If ever I can do anything for you, my dear Doctor, remember your old pal, Ambrose. Meanwhile expect one day soon an artist. He is to sketch Jim for the poster. I made the plan of it when I was with you in Tuchan and only want a good likeness. This is a *clever* fellow. . . ."

There are any number of clever fellows but few subjects like Jim and, such being the case, the sketches *this* clever fellow made were the beginning of his reputation. On the occasion of the visit the Doctor allowed his patient to leave his bed for the first time and lie on a long sofa.

Long as it was, however, it was twelve inches or more too short for Jim, who had to rest his feet on a chair.

"Good-morning, Mr. Macdonald," said the artist, ushered in by Dr. Spens. "I hope you are picking up your strength again."

Such ceremony was as unaccustomed to Jim as a shirt would be to a cow. He could not articulate a word, only open his eyes or his mouth, and stare at the speaker.

"I don't know if Dr. Spens here has told you," went on

the artist rapidly, noticing Jim's embarrassment, perhaps, with a painter's quickness of perception, "but Mr. Mandeville is very anxious to secure some sketches of you and has commissioned me to make them. I need not, I am sure, my dear Mr. Macdonald, assure you that I esteem it a very great privilege to have the honour of drawing such a distinguished person as yourself."

Our poor Jim could still utter no word. The sum of his experience had been hitherto small, and all these hints and tokens of another world than Tuchan had been crowded into a very small measure of time.

"You had better begin at once," whispered the Doctor, and so the artist drew forth his materials and set to work from a position where the light fell favourably upon that freckled, flame-topped face of Jim. Some might have found a ludicrous thing in him — his open mouth and eyes — his immense length outstretched. Some *had*, we know. But to the true artist such things are by no means the things ludicrous.

So with cunning pencil this clever fellow sketched in our hero's face on the paper, with clean, decisive lines, in profile, in three-quarters, in full; thereafter he shaded it cunningly, and did make it lifelike, with deftly laid tints, in more pictures than one. And, though he worked swiftly and easily, nearly two hours sped in the task, for his soul was in the work, and after that with a bow and a grave good-day he withdrew leaving Jim still wordless and staring. So this is how the great poster came into being, the poster better known perhaps than any other in London, than "Alas! my poor brother," "Pear's Soap," or that other famous Scotch character, "Wee Macgregor."

.

After the young man had left with perhaps half-a-dozen sketches of Jim in his possession and the exhilarating feel-

ing that two of them at least were masterpieces, the Doctor remembered his promise to measure Jim as soon as possible.

Surely this first day that he had come out of bed was a golden opportunity.

He hunted about in his consulting-room till he found a yard measure and coming back to where Jim lay, extended on a sofa with his huge feet resting on a chair at the end of it, went down on his knees at those feet.

So much new and extraordinary had happened to Jim lately that at first he paid little attention. When, however, Dr. Spens took the measure from his coat, kept it taut an instant from the sole of Jim's foot to the top of his shin bone, held his note-book open and entered something therein, the sick giant's interest was unusually roused.

"What are ye daein', Doctor?" he asked in a low hollow voice, which, in spite of the subdued tone, seemed to have increased in power since his illness.

"I promised Mr. Mandeville to measure you on the earliest opportunity, Jim," replied the Doctor, busy at his task.

"Measure me?" asked Jim vaguely.

"He wants to know when you've grown to eight feet high," said the Doctor, as he held the tape from Jim's shoulder to the crown of his flaming head and then went to the window to examine the result, forgetting for the moment, perhaps, that it was not a thermometer. He was a trifle absent-minded sometimes, the good Doctor.

A sudden spasm of pain went through Jim's body. Were such things possible? Did real human beings ever attain such monstrous, impertinent proportions? What had become of all the dreams of his early years that he should one day stop growing and be more or less normal? Was there truly and verily a likelihood of his reaching this hideous height? O, let the day at least be deferred awhile!

Dr. Spens turned round from the window; his face was all shining with pleasure.

"Jim," he cried.

Mournfully looked the patient at him.

"You're eight feet high to-day. Hurrah! A bottle of champagne for supper to-night! You shall have a glass, Jim, in which to drink to your future health and prosperity. It will do you good."

The Doctor patted him kindly on the shoulder, looked in the big, freckled face with that exquisite sympathy which was part of his nature, and left the room to despatch an immediate telegram to Mandeville. Jim remained alone on his sofa by the window. The Doctor's announcement had been, for the moment, little less than stunning. True, he had spoken some strange matters to Jim the other day, but, then, the giant had been so accustomed to finding his immensity a source of woe that it was difficult for him to realise all at once that it was now going to bring both distinction and profit. He had never been alert of brain and the shadowy, dreamy state of convalescence made his capacity for apprehension more opaque than ever.

Yes — it was the thing undoubted, irrefutable. He was eight feet high by the yard measure — the test that cannot lie.

For an instant he had the wild idea of ending it all, of raising that gigantic but enfeebled carcass, down which, to the toes, he looked with an overwhelming access of disgust and loathing, and hurling it from the window onto the road beneath. He dallied with the notion long enough for the sight of the body, lying crushed and mangled below, to become familiar to him — he could not help shuddering — then realised that, in the first place, he could not possibly get through the frame, and in the second would probably not terminate a miserable existence by dropping

fifteen feet. Why he could now almost *step* onto the ground!

Alas! There was no help for it.

He, Jim, had at last become a true and veritable *gigas* — was now the Twentieth-Century-Monster, and Titan-in-Trousers, of which fate all his life there had been grim and shadowy forebodings. His gianthood had been as firmly established as the king upon his throne. For ten minutes, perhaps, all the old miseries, half-forgotten in the appeasing weakness of recovery, half blotted out by weeks of delirium and insensibility, returned. There may never have been more miserable moments in Jim's life than those ten, during which the past once more and for the last time came *violently* back.

Then the new vitality, gained by him lately, reassumed power. The blood, the fresh blood flowing in his veins, had brought new ideas into his head. The old channels down his nerves had been filled up in a time of oblivion and rest. Nature had done her work. Jim was beginning to be a different person.

Pride, that gotten by him in some measure even before his illness, blew her trumpet in his ear, and he remembered how once in fair fight he had overthrown a young bull. This when his height was no more than a petty, contemptible seven feet! With the additional stature now his, what miracles of strength and daring could not be wrought in the world! He was separated from his fellow-mortals, but what then had the majority of them done for him hitherto! Let them crawl on with their little business somewhere down by his feet. He, Jim, would stalk, heedless of them, through the world. A giant, acknowledged and admired was he now, a giant full-blown and in complete working order.

He owed allegiance to none but his own race.

CHAPTER LV

EUPHEMIA expected the great Mr. Mandeville every moment. She moved in her own little world and perhaps, as she had never realised to the full the fact of having an extraordinary son like James, so she could not realise that there was a world in which his abnormality might prosper. The "Tickler" had seemed to her a short, fat, little man, who must be out of his senses. If, however, he wished to take Jim, Jim who was such a nuisance at home, he had better do it, she supposed. Naturally she could not parade Jim's destiny before her imagination. Every day the kitchen must be made bright and neat. It was her house, her little world, in which she held absolute sway. She scoured and scrubbed and dusted. To the unimaginative her efforts would have held a pathetic insignificance. James had been furnished out as smartly as possible. He sat among pillows by the fire, for the middle of October was cold so far north, still looking pale from his recent illness and, in that little kitchen, huge beyond all dreams of hugeness, with an air of having still in his system a latent capacity for growth.

There was a rattle of hoofs outside in the street, a sound of cheering, and then a clap at the door.

Euphemia opened it.

Donald, there, she knew. Dr. Spens holding the reins and Mr. Mandeville at his side, also. On the back seat was a diminutive person in a large coat, whose countenance was strange to her.

"Hulloa, Mrs. Macdonald, good-morning! Pleased to see you again," cried Mr. Mandeville in his rich and reso-

nant voice. Euphemia curtsied and then stared bewildered, twisting her hands in her apron. Youthful Tuchan, which had followed the dogcart with cheers, now, silent and gaping, encompassed the party round. A circle of flushed faces and saucer eyes stared at Mandeville's magnificent astrakhan and the beaked, black-eyed face between the wings of the collar.

"Boys and girls!" cried the "Tickler," "do you know what I've come to see in your two-penny-half-penny little village? The Scotch Giant! It will be something for you to remember all your lives." Then he turned to Euphemia. "How is Jim this morning?" said he, flashing his black eyes into hers.

"Weel eneuch, Sir," gaped Euphemia confusedly, as Mandeville brushed past her in his eagerness to catch the first sight of Jim. Yes, there he was sitting before the kitchen fire, his face turned, one shoulder-of-mutton hand on the chair, half-ready to rise from his seat. The spectacle of him in his armchair threw Mandeville into an ecstasy. "My dear boy! My admirable James! What a splendid recovery! Jehosaphat, how you have grown! It's the thing of the century! Don't get up, my dear boy. Mrs. Macdonald —"

Euphemia curtsied confusedly once more.

"You should be proud to be the mother of such a son. Confound me! if I knew how you did it. Doctor! didn't I tell you? Is the "Great Tickler" ever wrong in his prognostications? Haven't we knocked out all the other giants on the market? The public won't have any more use for them than a toad has for side-pockets."

"Gently, Mandeville. I can't have you exciting my patient," replied the Doctor, with his usual smile of amusement at the "Tickler's" exuberance.

"Rats, my dear fellow!" replied the "Tickler." "Excitement never did anybody any harm, but all the same I

didn't come here to talk. Time is short. The B. P. is on tip-toe already. We mustn't have a disappointment. I have promised that James should appear in London the first day of the Christmas holidays. Mandeville's Circus will have a treat in store for the kiddies. The first day of the Christmas holidays! D'you hear that, Jim? Don't that buck you up a bit? Eh! Mrs. Macdonald, that's a beautiful little boy of yours! A-ha! Trust the 'Tickler's' eye! But, Spens, there's any amount to do this morning and I must catch the afternoon train from Duke's Ferry. Can't stop away a fortnight this time. First of all I must have a talk with Jim, Jim, the vast, the magnificent. Then we must call in Mr. Hay, great little Mr. Hay of the Haymarket, and measure him for some suits. That all right, Spens?"

"Perfectly," replied the Doctor and, thinking it best that Mandeville and Jim should have a private talk together, withdrew Euphemia to her bedroom, on pretext of examining her chest for a cough.

CHAPTER LVI

LEFT alone with James Macdonald, Mandeville rubbed his hands in delight and chuckled to himself.

"My dear boy," he said, "I'm so glad to see you on the road to recovery. But, of course, you don't remember me. Last time we met you were dead-plumb unconscious. My hat! I shan't forget the sight of you lying on that road in a hurry."

This hook-nosed, black-eyed gentleman was quite new in James' experience. He was astonished to find anyone in such a state of delight at seeing him.

Was he not the outlaw? he, who had outraged, insulted, and defied Tuchan at large? he, who was ridiculously different from ordinary people, a figure of fun, a fantastical man-monster, a sight to amuse or revolt according to temperament? Then he suddenly remembered. This was the gentleman who, according to Dr. Spens, had so much admired him. It seemed, indeed, very strange to James, hardly credible, like one of those half-real dreams he had during his illness.

His life was like some fantastic dream now.

"Ye'll be Mr. Mandeville," he said. "Dr. Spens told me about ye."

"And you know you're coming to London with me, James. You're to be one of the sensations of the Christmas holidays. Can't you imagine yourself standing on the stage before thousands of people, and all the little boys and girls shouting, 'Hurrah for the Scotch Giant!' and the band playing, 'See the Conquering Hero comes.' You shall wear a bonnet and a kilt, and strut up and down the

stage, and show yourself off, and all the spectators will shout again. Then fine ladies and gentlemen from Grosvenor Square and Berkeley Square, lords and countesses and millionairesses, will come up onto the stage and shake your hand, and you'll shake theirs and say, 'How d'you do?' 'It's a braw morn, the morn,' just to give them the pleasure of hearing you speak. And then with the superb and roaring voice of yours you shall sing, 'My luv is like a red, red rose,' and 'Scots wha hae,' and finish up by dancing the 'Highland Fling' and the 'Sword Dance.'

James, pale and huge and propped up in his chair with pillows, looked at Mandeville in a hazy and dreamy fashion, while he walked up and down the room, acting the whole scene, which his imagination forecast, with a fiery unction and prodigality of gesture that seemed to make it almost a reality.

To James, unacquainted with any form of life save that in the little Scotch village and the Quarries, the sense of what Mandeville said was very remote, but what he did understand, frightened him. He would never have the courage to show off that huge body which had been, all through his life, the hateful cause of his misery and misfortune. Mandeville's outburst caused a revulsion against the faint feeling of pride that had begun to grow since the episode of the bull. Besides — how distant all *that* seemed. The thought of what was ahead sapped all his courage. He felt content to go on humbly in Tuchan.

Till that moment, till everything was made clear by the vivid imagination and life-like gestures of the "Tickler," he had never in the least realised what was in store for him. With this sudden revulsion all his self-conscious disgust at himself returned. He had never, even in his new-found pride, contemplated this.

"Let me bide here," he said. "A canna dae it." The Jew stopped in his march like one shot.

"Cannot do it?" he cried. "My dear lad, this is absurd. You don't mean what you say."

"I mean what I say richt eneuch."

"But why?" inquired the "Tickler." "What is the reason that makes you unwilling? Think of the life. Jehosaphat! Just compare Tuche and London, and not only London, but the world, foreign cities, kings perhaps. You can't be serious, dear boy."

"I'm nae wishfu' to show masel' in public," said James, with that latent obstinacy which had, in part, been a cause of his misfortunes. "I'll bide at hame."

Before his illness James would have concealed the reasons which made him unwilling to follow the "Tickler's" fortunes, or, at any rate, have attempted to put others on a false scent in order to save himself the pain of divulging his own feelings. He was, however, changing.

His skin, hide, epidermis, nervous system, whatever you like to call it, was becoming tougher. Already he felt less sensitive to slight and misfortune.

Only —

The thought of standing up to the public gaze with thousands of strong white lights glaring upon him, of hearing his name shouted by thousands of gaping strangers, of making those mighty limbs, which all his life had been shame and misery to him, the spectacle for a city's comment or applause, smote him at the present with terror and astonishment.

"I canna show masel'," he said again, huge and pale. "I'll bide at hame. It's nae sae bad."

The "Tickler" clasped his hands in despair. It almost looked as if he were about to fall at James' feet and supplicate him with prayers.

"My boy, my boy!" he cried in a kind of anguish.

"I'll bide at hame," said James more doggedly and stubbornly still.

The "Tickler" flung open his opulent, astrakhan coat. There was something regal and dominant about him. The glance of old Jewish kings flamed from his black eyes, the glance of a race that has been despised, spat upon with contumely, harried and tortured, but never conquered — the flashing glance of the Chosen Race.

"My boy," he cried, "why do you not wish to come with me?"

"I hate ma huge body. I canna show it," whispered James.

It was the first time he had ever made this confession to anyone.

The Jew looked at him strangely.

In the huge face, in which the bones and the freckles on the dead-white showed after the giant's recent illness, there was something like a dogged, hunted look. Hard as the Jews are to the outside world (and no wonder after their centuries of oppression), they are tender to their own people and tender to suffering in others.

So the Jew looked at James and then said gently:

"My boy, *why* do you hate your magnificent big body?"

"An' wherefore sud I not?" burst out the youthful giant, all the sensations felt in the course of his life pouring forth in wild words.

"Hae I no been the mock of a' the bairns an' lassies since I was a bit lad? Did they no mak' pictures o' me on the wa's. Hasna everyane flyted and jeered at me for the last ten years? An' what was the reason of it a' save this body o' mine? But for that I nicht ha' been happy an' contented here at hame or hae mairrit a decent lassie, same as ma elder brithers. As it is, I hae been alane a' ma life, an' alane I maun stay till I dee. Wha' wad hae onythin' tae dae wi' a giant save stare at him in a show? A giant canna hae friens or bairns. He's a thing apairt

like a great rock on a muir, wi' naethin' save the cryin' o' the whaups and the winds for his companions."

A sob shook the vast and enfeebled frame of James Macdonald and he buried his face in his hands.

"Boy," said the "Tickler," "we can none of us be what we want to be or have what we want to have. 'Tis an ancient and true reflection. Do you know that although I have the most superb heart, the most magnificent lungs in Europe, and a brain, Napoleonic, in compartments, I would, in some moods, sooner be a tall, fair man, whose brain was never sufficiently nourished and was bound to give out after forty! If you come with me, you gain Fame and Fortune. These are great goddesses and many seek to touch the hem of their garments. You may be lonely and, indeed, loneliness is a sad thing, but you can partially forget it in new sights, new countries, new faces. Look down from your great height, James, and despise the world."

"It's easy for ye to say these things, Mr. Mandeville," said James, "but then lucky for ye ye werena born a giant."

"My dear boy," replied the sympathetic "Tickler," "I have met other giants, none such magnificent specimens as you, I admit, and other human beings whom some freak of nature has removed from the usual sphere of activity of humanity. I have been head of Mandeville's Circus for nearly twenty years and I know what I am talking about."

"An' did they a' get used to showin' theirsels?" asked James.

"You are not the only sufferer in the world, James," replied the "Tickler." "They all suffered once, but they came to the conclusion that it was the best thing for them to make use of those very oddities which distinguished them from the rest of mankind. And now, James, behold them prosperous, rich, and happy."

"Rich and happy," repeated the giant, "but, Mr.

Mandeville, dae they never feel unhappy when they think they are unlike ither folk?"

"I do not think that after a time they mind," replied the "Tickler." "Their oddities become a second nature to them, you see. They are a kind of family, between whom perhaps there is a tacit understanding of sympathy, drawing a livelihood from their more conventionally moulded relations. After all, James, they have in these very oddities sources of wealth and distinction and I think that, in time, they even become rather proud of those differences, which, in earlier days, no doubt used to make them miserable. Yes, yes, I am sure it is so."

"An' if I gang wi' ye, wha'll be at the —" James gulped, "circus beside me."

"Well, my dear James, there's the Bearded Woman whose name is Sarah Muggins, and the Lilliputian Troupe and the Dogfaced Man, and Lombroso, the Venetian Dwarf, and a host of others."

"An' ye say they're happy wi' ye and dinna mind their —" Jim sought about for a word.

"Physical characteristics," supplied the "Tickler." "No, James, I pledge my word they do not. Why, note their occupations, when not engaged in the official business of the circus. Sarah Muggins signs post-cards for 'the Snatcho Hair-Restorer Company,' and writes tracts on Roman Catholicism, to which she has lately become a convert. There is no attempt made at Mandeville's Circus to interfere with the liberty of conscience. The Lilliputian Troupe jointly edit a Children's Magazine called Little Tots. Kids from all over the world communicate with them in thousands. The Dogfaced Man is no mean hand at a snappy article. His range is wide. He can give you an interesting ten minutes whether he chooses 'The State of the Money-Market' or tells you 'How it Feels to be a Freak.'

"My boy, are these the vocations of unhappy creatures?"

"It maun be anither world," said the giant dreamily.

"Another world or another state of mind, which is the same thing," replied the "Tickler." "Perhaps my freaks have rid themselves of the ordinary human emotions and affections, but then they were not born like ordinary human [beings, and in so far as they were in touch with ordinary humanity they were miserable.

"That was only logical.

"The Unnatural could not mix with the Natural. The Natural were too many, too hard, too strong. *Now* they have withdrawn into a place of refuge. They are fenced off from the Natural. The Natural can only see them through glass windows, from behind bars. The turnstile guards Sarah Muggins as efficaciously as the briar-hedge guarded the Sleeping-Beauty, or the labyrinth fair Rosamund.

"O, my James, if you could see the many-headed Natural come pushing, gaping, and grinning on a Saturday afternoon! It has saved up its pennies, hard-won in the grimy struggle for existence, to stare at the cosy, peaceful Unnatural. Workmen, their wives and children, clerks in their shabby-respectable coats with their petty-minded respectable consorts, fine ladies with lorgnettes and an air of contempt and pity mingled, in they come at the turnstiles pushing, gaping, and grinning, knocking up against each other, protesting, apologising, passing surly word and mindless commonplace, types of the world which goes on outside ceaselessly, irrationally, the world where men are trampled down for lost causes and fight for ideals which they do not understand.

"In comes the crowd.

"Boy, you should see it on a Saturday afternoon.

"In comes the crowd — oh piteous irony! — to stare at and jostle in front of those whom the great Potter has marred.

"And they, the cosy Unnatural — Lombroso the Venetian Dwarf, Sarah Muggins the Bearded Woman, Jo-Jo the Dogfaced Man, the Boneless Wonder, and India-rubber-skinned Ike — when they see the many headed Natural crowding in front of them, pointing and giggling with shrill, squeaky voices, opening eyes in wonder, and making coarse pleasantries, do *they* regret, do *they* suffer, do *they* feel alone and aloof from the world out of which this many-headed Natural comes gaping, grinning, and jostling?

"Ah, Boy! They just sit in their appointed places and smile in secret. The voices and words of the many-headed Natural are meaningless for them. They sit like kings and queens receiving an audience, or like the old Assyrian idols in the British Museum, calm, inscrutable, strong."

The "Tickler" flung back his opulent astrakhan coat and his black eyes flashed the proud glance of the conqueror and anon softened with a kindly glance at Jim, who sat chin in hand with his wild red hair falling over his forehead. Jim listened. Much he did not understand, but the dominant, virile nature of the "Great Tickler" of the B. P. mastered his weakness like a tonic. Mandeville made a gesture as he looked at him.

"Once," he said, "they may have been unhappy like you, boy. They may have mourned because they were not and could not be like other people. Their sensitive natures may have suffered agonies because they were in the world and yet not of it. They may have wanted friends, love, and happiness. Now all these old feelings, all these old sufferings have passed away like a dream. They are still in the world but no longer do they regret that they are not of it.

"The world, which the many-headed Natural knows, where lost causes are fought for and ideals, which no man

understands, no longer exists for them. They are in a new world, a world which many-headed Natural does not know, a world where no sorrow knocks at the door.

"Boy, once they sorrowed too much but now the tears are dried from their eyes, are wiped away. They dwell calm and happy in this new world of theirs and hear but dim murmurs of the old one raving outside, of trumpets blown for wars confusedly and rumours of an endless and mysterious battle. Humanity marches on to a far-off, unknown doom, with great wars and crying of prophets and waving of banners and lamentations of the lost. Humanity marches on crying its little gospels, seeing its temples and its nations overthrown and buried, casting away its old gods and taking new, but my cosy Unnatural sits in its appointed places, and watches the march of Humanity. It takes toll of Humanity. Long ago Humanity cast it out."

The huge, red-headed figure in the chair, chin in hand, watched Ambrose Mandeville as he paced the room in his astrakhan coat. Ignorant as he was, more than half the meaning of the Jew's words escaped him, but his unduly sensitive organism and his awakening brain vibrated to the trumpet-call. Mandeville with his opulent coat, many-coloured cravat, huge pearl tie-pin, a king's gift, and glittering patent-leather boots seemed the very epitome of the twentieth century, but, in reality, he was a throw-back to some ancient Hebrew prophet rousing a sluggish city from its worship of materialism. It was the gospel of force he preached, the call "to take toll of the World."

"Jim," he said turning to the huge red-headed boy whose eyes never left his face, "Jim, your world, your tiny self-centred Scotch village, your local Pharisee (I refer in these metaphorical terms to the Reverend Simon McManus), the girl whom you loved with a boy's imaginative love, the only love in the world, the only one worth

giving or having, have all cast you out. They have cast you out into the world.

"From your great height, my James, you can assuredly see it lying before you — shining rivers, mountains of ore, walled cities of a thousand spires, the sea with its innumerable traffic of ships, the foam-girt islands.

"Those very peculiarities, which were your disadvantage for the humdrum life of your village, my James, now become your asset, your prospect, your money-bags. The world is for you, now, one vast treasure-hoard. My James, we will rifle the hoard together. Only the negative people can be happy. Your vast size has forever prevented you from being negative. Therefore you cannot be happy. You see your substitute for happiness. Come with me!"

"Mr. Mandeville," said James with the vague, lost look of those who say good-bye to old things and as yet do not understand the new, "I'll come wi' ye. Sure as death, I'll come wi' ye."

In one instant, with flying coat and flashing eyes, the "Tickler" had bounded across the room and was at the Scotch Giant's side. He shouted with delight, clapped Jim upon the shoulder, wrung his limp shoulder-of-mutton hands, cried, "Bravo! Bravo!! Bravo!!!" In another instant he had buttoned up his fur-coat and again become the man of business. Like a man of business, he wasted neither his enthusiasms or his powers of oratory.

"Right oh! my boy," he said.

Then called to Dr. Spens.

CHAPTER LVII

THE Doctor came down the stairs with Mrs. Macdonald.

"Is it fixed up?" he asked.

"James Macdonald is coming with me," replied the "Tickler."

Mrs. Macdonald stood with her old air of perplexity, twisting her toil-worn hands in her apron. The business was altogether out of her ken. She had never understood how she came to have a son like James — she, the *tiny* woman. Everything connected with him was extraordinary, incomprehensible. Apparently the strange, short, fat, noisy gentleman was going to take him away. Why? Euphemia could not understand. She had talked the matter over with Alexander. *He* had smoked a pipe over it and said that on the whole they could not interfere.

Something caught and shook Euphemia.

Old memories came flooding back, memories of her big boy, her pride in him, the time when he was ill and Dr. Spens there had barely brought him back to life. Extraordinary and incomprehensible as was everything connected with him, Jim was her son, her great, clumsy, puppy son.

She and he seemed to have drifted apart. Jim oughtn't to go away.

He must stop at home, so that she might take care of him.

He had been unhappy. Otherwise he would not want to go away.

Perhaps he might think better of going. Thus, twisting

her hands in her apron, she pondered in perplexity. Then suddenly, burying her face in it, burst into tears.

"Don't take on, Mrs. Macdonald," said Dr. Spens.

"We are not going to hurt him," reassured the "Tickler."

"I'll be richt eneuch, mither," said James himself. Once, perhaps, the thought that his mother wanted him at home might have been enough to detain him, but now he was harder and tougher. The old life, the old cottage, the old village, the old commonplaces, seemed now meaningless to him. The "Tickler" had aroused feelings that must be satisfied, even at the cost of hurting himself. The world, beyond the great twin peaks of More and Moich, called him and he must go. He had lost, in some way, the sense of pleasure or pain in so far as they affected himself or others individually and looked now at everything on a greater scale, had already begun, even as the "Tickler" prophesied, to stand outside Humanity. All these *old* people seemed so insignificant, their sorrows so trifling. Even as the "Tickler" prophesied, he had begun to look down from his great height.

Before these three — her son, Mandeville, and the Doctor, Euphemia felt lost and lonely. Some dear, old, vague, nameless thing had vanished. She twisted her toil-worn hands in her apron after drying her eyes with it. Her last-born son was no longer dependent on her but on this black-eyed, hook-nosed stranger. All the maternal heart of Euphemia, so insensible to the real sufferings of Jim, and nature will have it so, was wrung by this last actual fact — the loss of Jim. He, huge, pale, fiery-headed, looked at her from his chair. At present he was too weak to walk much, but with some difficulty he got up and shambled towards Euphemia as she stood sniffing and twisting her toil-worn hands in her apron.

"Dinna greet, mither," said he, laying his vast hand on

her shoulder, beside him Euphemia looked like a little child, "I'll be richt eneuch."

Jim touched her across a chasm of years — only for a moment alas! — and then he was further off than ever. The last link with her big puppy boy was broken. If mere words were needed to remind her the "Tickler" supplied them.

"When can I have James, Doctor?" asked he, all intent on business.

"In a month, I should say, he could travel," replied the Doctor.

"A month!" cried Mandeville, "and then hey for the world!"

"Now, however, hey for the tailor! Curiously enough his name is Hay, Hay and Sons of the Haymarket, one of the swaggiest London tailors. Hay diddles us by charging extravagant prices, but James must have of the best. Let us make Hay while the sun shines! I'll call him. Hey for Mr. Hay!"

A little man, the third of the party in the dogcart, followed Mandeville back into the room. He was a queer mixture of deference, condescension, shrewdness, and exquisite neatness. His dress was, in fact, utterly fastidious, yet at the same time modest. He was not accustomed to have such queer clients and was at pains to show it. At the same time the "Tickler" was a valuable patron. He could not afford to lose him.

"Now then, Mr. Hay, to business!" said the "Tickler."

Mr. Hay cast a glance of such mingled and subtle emotions round the humble cottage that it defies description or at any rate analysis, and then rapidly took in the vast red-headed Jim standing by his mother.

"Let me make known your new client to you, Mr. Hay. Let me introduce the Scotch Giant, James Macdonald."

The poor little tailor measured once more the colossal

proportions of him whom the exuberant Mr. Ambrose Mandeville called "Copper-Top." That fiery shock of hair, tumbling above the round, white, freckled face, touched the very ceiling of the little kitchen; the bulk of him seemed the bulk of some domesticated pachyderm; the hands, the terrible hands of pursuers in sorry dreams. So, from crown to sole, the faltering glance of Mr. Hay appraised the scale of the Scotch Giant. To see him there, huge, raw-boned, incomplete, yet dwarfing all, was in itself an experience to be remembered for life; to think that he must be measured, clothed, confined in garments cut by the house in the Haymarket, an overpowering thought that left the imagination near bankrupt.

Mr. Hay had been tailor to the late-lamented Marquis of Fotheringay and had, for the lustrum during which that exotic young nobleman dazzled the world of fashion by his marvellous costumes and eccentric behaviour, received orders of the most wonderful description without winking an eyelid. Never before, however, had he been requested to make garments for an "Illustrious Man-Mountain." Though prepared for his latest office he could not dissemble his utter astonishment. He had never seen such a figure. He stood gasping.

"Can you make a neat job of the Scotch Giant, Mr. Hay?" asked the "Tickler."

"The firm will do its best, Mr. Mandeville," said the neat and diminutive Mr. Hay, stroking his pointed, prominent, little chin, and looking pensive. "I hope to give every satisfaction."

"James may stand up to be measured, Doctor, I suppose," said Mandeville.

"For a short time," replied Spens.

"Come into the middle of the room then," said Mandeville. "Don't hold yourself too stiffly, Jim. Stand up straight."

James Macdonald did as commanded. All the curious ritual was part of his new life. He had never gone through it before; knew not the ceremony of clothing, only the necessity of covering nakedness. Euphemia looked on mournfully twisting her toil-worn hands in her apron. Mr. Hay, as he stared up at the vast red-headed figure, for once in his life seemed at a loss.

"If you'll measure the Scotch Giant, I'll take down the figures," said Mandeville. "I've a pocket-book and pencil. I know the game all right."

"Very well, Mr. Mandeville," said the tailor, "but —"

He stood there still stroking his prominent, pointed, little chin in perplexity.

"Well, what is it, Mr. Hay?" asked Mandeville. "How can we assist you? I'm anxious that the clothes of the Scotch Giant should be a credit to your old-established house, both for your sake and mine."

"We mustn't have a failure. His walking-dress must be the talk of town. How can we assist you?"

"The fact is, Mr. Mandeville," replied diminutive Mr. Hay with his mingled air of deference and condescension, to which was now added a certain amount of embarrassment, "the fact is that owing to the — er — abnormal proportions, if I may so, of your — um — remarkable protégé" (good word for Mr. Hay), "I — er — find myself unable to measure any part of him except his legs. A very singular circumstance, if I may say so, gentlemen, and one utterly unparalleled in my experience."

"Oh! that's all right, Mr. Hay," said the "Tickler" cheerily. "Make a start with the legs and work upwards. You can have a chair to stand on, or perhaps the Doctor will hold you up."

Mr. Hay coughed. A pleasantry that seemed to him in bad taste always brought on a cough, slight but decisive. These were queer clients, thought diminutive Mr. Hay.

In the old times, Hay and Son only worked for the nobility and gentry, but now the old institutions were crumbling. Hay and Son, like everyone else, had to take what they could get.

Therefore — why not a chair?

"Thank you, Sir. If I may," he said.

"Are you ready, Mr. Mandeville?"

"Aye, Aye," said the "Tickler" in his cheery fashion.

Diminutive Mr. Hay whipped a measure out of his pocket and started operations.

He uttered a magic number. The "Tickler" made reply and ciphered in his note-book. The measuring of James had begun.

And what a historic measuring it was! Never before had tape spanned that stupendous chest, the huge muscular thighs, that thick columnar neck! Never before had any record but that of the eye valued the immense actualities, the immense possibilities of the Scotch Giant!

I often think, as I recall this scene, that some notable painter, a man of humorous, deft, pathetic touches, should find there inspiration. Do not these fate-laden moments demand another life on canvas, cry for an immortality that my poor pen can never give them?

Are not the characters, gathered together in that little cottage room, sufficiently strange, incongruous, and dramatic? Such a painter could draw up the "Tickler" vivid, masterful, alert, *deus ex machina*; Dr. Spens, gentle, rather grey, a little tired, and a little sad; Euphemia, utterly bewildered, slipshod perhaps, blubbered with tears, eternally twisting her hands in her apron, and mortally astounded at such a strange rite. Then putting all the power of his mind and craft behind his brush, shall he limn James Macdonald, eminent, ignorant, rude, in health little, in determination more, feeling the destiny that calls great men, and before him, a-tiptoe on the chair, the little Snip,

with tape in fingers, and clacking portentous figures of measurements beyond our own conceived dimensions. I have lived with them all, these people, yea know them as friends, and now I must shortly bid them farewell. Yet would I have their portraits as a remembrance.

.

The measuring of James was over at last.

"Jim, you'd better sit down again by the fire," said Dr. Spens. "It will never do to overtire yourself if you're wanted by Mr. Mandeville in a month."

"Pray, Mr. Mandeville, what will your — er — protégé require?" asked Mr. Hay. "I've measured him for overcoat as well as lounge-suit and evening dress. How many of each would he desire?"

"Have you not measured for a tail-coat, Mr. Hay?" asked Mandeville.

"Your pardon, Sir, I have. I forgot I have measured for morning and frock."

"Well, to start with, we'd better have dark and light morning, dark and light frock, four lounge-suits, thick and medium, and three pairs of trousers."

"Very good, Sir," said Mr. Hay, visibly brightening up. Although the clients were queer, at any rate they gave substantial orders and he was going to be rewarded for his visit to Scotland.

"It'll take a deal of cloth, Mr. Mandeville," he added parenthetically. "It will, if you'll excuse my saying so, Sir, be a singular undertaking."

"Of course it will," replied the "Tickler." "You have a customer to be proud of. He's unique, a gilt-edged security, Mr. Hay. It will be worth the while of your firm to turn him out a successful rig. He's going to be the biggest boom London's seen for many years. And now about waistcoats?"

"Waistcoats! Yes, Sir, certainly. And how many of *them* will *he* require, Sir?" asked the little tailor, looking still brighter.

"Let me see. One vest to each suit, Mr. Hay, and three fancy."

"What colour, Sir? Knitted or cloth?"

"Aha!" murmured Mandeville meditatively, "something striking! Something flash! Waistcoats to arrest the eye! That is what we need. Winter is coming. Mr. Hay, let them be knitted, knitted close and warm. The lungs of our big Copper-Top here are hardly sound. We will keep him snug through the winter; we will keep him smart. Make me, Mr. Hay, waistcoats of pure wool, one puce, one crimson, and one orange. Such a figure as that of our *gigas* can carry off anything. Let him walk our London streets fronted with ripe, glowing colour."

"Very good, Sir." Little Mr. Hay snapped together his note-book and the "Tickler" handed him the sheet of paper containing James' measurements. "Very good, Sir."

"That'll be all, thank you, Mr. Hay. We'll join you in a moment."

The little tailor left the room with a slight inclination to Jim and Euphemia who had, her hands still twisted in her apron, watched the operations without a word.

"Now, Mrs. Macdonald," said the "Tickler" heartily, "our business is finished for the day. Provided all goes well, I'll come and fetch James in a month with the Doctor's permission. My boy," he said turning to the *gigas*, "I hope you will look forward to the ending of this month as eagerly as I do."

But Euphemia had been dumfounded by the ceremony which she had just witnessed.

"Air a' they claes for Jim?" she asked.

Never in her life had she heard of such a quantity of clothes being ordered at one time for the same person.

She hardly believed the sight of her eyes and the hearing of her ears. And was that neat little person, who saluted her so courteously, a tailor? It seemed as if beings from a new world had entered her little cottage.

For the first time she began to be conscious to what an extraordinarily changed existence her great puppy-boy James must be going.

"Air a' they claes for Jim?" she cried again. "What can a body want with them a'?"

"Ah! Mrs. Macdonald," said Mandeville, "James is going to be a big thing, the talk of the town, the boom of the century. He's none of your half-and-half giants, no elastic-necked six-footer. He's a regular out-and-outer, James is. He and I are going to make a splash. You ask me what he will do with all these clothes, Mrs. Macdonald, I'll tell you."

CHAPTER LVIII

"**M**RS. MACDONALD," cried he, falling at the same time into one of his magnificent attitudes and those bursts of somewhat florid eloquence to which he was addicted, like Napoleon and no doubt also Timur the Tartar, Attila, Alexander, and other great conquerors, "what is this universe we live in but an incomprehensible riddle?" Euphemia looked utterly bewildered as always, and Jim still stared under the fringes of his red hair with almost as little comprehension.

"While we say 'now' the moment passes. There is no 'now.' Can you say, Mrs. Macdonald, how far I exist outside your own perception of me? Dare you positively affirm that I really *do* exist? That you yourself do? No. There is no absolute proof of such things."

"Aiggs-es?" queried Euphemia, dolefully trying to grapple with the "Tickler's" language. "I dinna ken ony aiggs."

"A very regular hypothesis, Mrs. Macdonald," replied the "Tickler." "You know, of course, the old axiom, *ab ovo omne vivum*, but as you pertinently say, is there anything *vivum*, any *ovum* at all?"

"Ambrose — Ambrose," exclaimed Spens, but the "Tickler" impatiently waved his beringed hand and continued:

"The atoms that compose the body commonly known as Mrs. Macdonald are themselves composed of an infinite number of electrons. For your information, my dear madam, in case you do not know it, I may as well state that an electron is in about the same ratio to an atom as our earth is to the solar system, and who can tell whether

our solar system may not be perhaps itself an atom in the red corpuscles of the blood of some giant? How in the name of fortune, in the face of these great mysteries, can we mortals take ourselves seriously? How can America squabble with Germany over some trade boundary? How can our own Britain convulse itself over such a trumpery question as *Dreadnoughts*? How can one creed be set up against another with every appearance of infallibility? How can men talk glibly of right and wrong? How can we remain in the same dimension as our ordinary, strenuous, bustling life? Really, Mrs. Macdonald, I must catch hold of this chair just to get myself back. I must feel something homely and commonplace in my grasp. When the Prince of Wales came to see Mandeville's Circus I had to hold a captain's biscuit in my pocket just to make myself forget that we were both a hundred million miles distant from the sun and to remind myself that I must call him 'Your Royal Highness.' My dear Mrs. Macdonald, I really hope you will never be reduced to holding a captain's biscuit in order to get back into your proper dimension. It is very hard, huge, and uncomfortable in one's pocket. That is why I always carry one about. There is nothing like a hard and uncomfortable experience to make one imagine for the moment that one really does exist. It feels like it anyway and that's something. Now — why have we invented creeds, kings, ceremonies, laws, and, last and most important of all, clothes? Simply, in order that the ordinary business of our funny little earth may be carried on, simply to prevent the continued necessity of holding on to 'chairs' and 'captain's biscuits.' Clothes are indeed our safety-anchor. A distinguished metaphysician and mystic once went naked, was heavily fined, and incarcerated. I do not pity him. Such a deliberate blow at the world's moralities of convention should have been even more rigorously pun-

ished. Clothes, Mrs. Macdonald, as you press me to give you my philosophy of them, are *the* most important link in the whole elaborate chain that binds us to earth. Were it not for clothes we should see the whole elaborate edifice we have built up tumble down like the walls of Jericho. Oh! my dear Madam, never be tempted to go without your apparel."

Euphemia gazed at the inspired "Tickler" every moment more open-mouthed and staring.

"The very fact of dressing, tedious though it is, turns the key on the great mysteries. Listen now! We cannot find a collar-stud. Frenzy seizes us. We use abominable and intemperate language. Blush incontinently at our excess when the stud is retrieved. Lo and behold! without any trouble at all we have been living in our proper dimension. We have done wrong and repented. Looked for something and found it. That five minutes in the morning is just an exemplar of our lives. We have attached a certain definitive meaning to something said and done. Hurrah! We have forgotten our lightning-brief unreality and plunge joyfully into the business of the day. We shall continue to attach certain definite meanings to all we hear, say, and do till we fall to unconsciousness. Oh! fortunate us! Blessed be the man who invented clothes, gave us something intended to be practical, but invested with an elaborate symbolism of its own. My dear Mrs. Macdonald, we have, in the course of the ages, fully decided that we must attach the highest importance to the symbolism of clothes. Kings, bishops, admirals, generals, cricketers, railway-porters, postmen, and lord-mayors all have peculiar and selected clothing — thus goes the train of thought, the chain that must fetter us down in our dimension. We dignify all our institutions and societies with reality and then dignify our clothing because it is representative of them. Thus goes that strange symbol-

ising of the practical and utilitarian which composes our world. 'Quite right, too,' you will say, Mrs. Macdonald, and I am with you. Never doubt it. I cannot carry a captain's biscuit in my pocket, night and day, forever and aye. It is far too big. Oh! yes, our arrangements are eminently sensible. And so, by a clear, if topsy-turvy, chain of reasoning we come to the philosophy of clothes, to the mighty symbol of dress.

"When once we begin to flout the weird and wonderful ceremony, if at any time we scamp our shaving, Mrs. Macdonald, or put on an old pair of trousers because they are more comfortable than our new ones, in what deadly danger we are!

"We are in risk of getting out of our dimension again.

"When I walk up Piccadilly Hill and that sun, a hundred million miles off, is shining and the birds are twittering in the leafy Green Park, and the dandies, glossy and radiant, come brushed, pranked, and careless out of their clubs to saunter up Bond Street before luncheon, and the little ladies in their summer finery skip, with lifted skirts, out of their motor-broughams into modistes' and jewellers', what a thrill of admiration at the world's great common-sense the scene gives me! I relax my grip of the captain's biscuit in my trouser-pocket, hitherto the only blot on my appearance, and saunter up Bond Street myself — almost as pranked, glossy, and careless as my admired dandies.

"I begin even to wish I was fair and tall, not short and square. But a grey day! when all the little fairies are in doors or close-carriages; when no one walks as if he thought anything worth a moment's struggle, joy, or sorrow; when London is lost in a Lethe of fog.

"What a terrific effect those days have upon me! How ghastly are my endeavours to keep within the dimension!

"Many is the captain's biscuit I have broken with my clutch of despair.

"I have to take a taxi and drive straight to my friend Mr. Hay of the Haymarket. It is only a fierce and sustained argument over the fit of a coat, an intense mental application to the choice of a suit, which can save me in these moods.

"Again, again, I say, clothes are our safety-anchor. Mrs. Macdonald, do you still ask why I am dressed so opulently?

"Opulence is the badge of my people. But in many ways I am unlike them. *I* have adopted the good common-sense way of the world in symbolising the practical and the utilitarian.

"Hence the growth of my great circus.

"Hence the splendid fashion of my dress.

"Hence the numerous articles of apparel I have ordered for Jim.

"*I* revere the societies and institutions of the world because they keep me within my dimensions. Jim is to be a magnificent institution. His clothes must be a symbol of all that is powerful and great. O, Mrs. Macdonald, here we can only walk on the water when it is frozen.

"Directly our feet touch fluidity we are drowned. So top-hat is raised to top-hat, sabre lifted to epaulette, cocked-hat doffed to crown — and all these strange fancies in the same dimension elaborately greet, court, and flatter each other. Our Jim must be as intricate, fanciful, and honourable as anyone else in this dimension. The dress he wears must be eloquent of that great world common-sense, which has declared him to be of importance."

"Ambrose," said the Doctor, who had listened to Mandeville's discourse in his usual patient manner, "if you talk any more you will miss your train. There's only just time for you to get back to Duke's Ferry. After all, you will see Jim again in a month."

The "Tickler" pulled out his watch.

"Jehosaphat, Spens, you're right," he said. "Good-bye, Mrs. Macdonald."

The tiny woman held out a flag of utter capitulation. Mandeville had swamped her once and forever. Such bewilderment as hers had, surely, never before been painted on a human countenance.

She was too overwhelmed even to bob.

So.

CHAPTER LIX

"IN a month, my dear boy," said "Tickler," with a cheery shout, as he took his place in the dogcart.

"Two lounge-suits, an orange vest, and a fur-coat, Sir," deferentially murmured Mr. Hay from the back. "You shall have them in a month, Sir. Never fear."

"Sir," to Jim! How quickly the face of the world changes!

"In a month! Jim laddie, ye maun gae in a month," cried Euphemia, burying her face in her son's huge form in one of those public displays of emotion to which she was so prone.

"In a month!" echoed Jim, half-unconsciously aloud, as he watched the Doctor's cart retreat followed by the children of Tuchan, all shouting and jumping to get a view of the two strangers.

It is the first time since his illness that Jim has been seen out of doors. In the excitement of watching the magnificent "Tickler" vanish orientally in the Doctor's dogcart, Tuchan notices him not to begin with as he stands before Macdonald's, watching too. Then the children suddenly see him. In their minds he has always been a terrific, remote, legendary figure; in the infantile minds his five months of illness seem as ten years to older folk, and so ancient accusations have been forgotten in his new-found celebrity. Surely Jim was always one to be cheered, and loudly their shrill shouts applaud him.

And now on the threshold of such gigantic eminence as few men attain to, we leave Jim Macdonald.

The old days of ignoble insult, of misunderstanding, which he was too bewildered, too timid to resent, have passed away. Now, indeed, he has pride in himself, power over himself, the power that comes from pride. Truly it is no small thing to overthrow young bulls single handed; truly he, whom the great Ambrose Mandeville chooses to favour, may call himself "Lucky Jim."

Moreover, in the brain under that fiery pile of hair a kind of philosophy is hatching.

The past has left a sting, it may be ineradicable, but he can be optimistic about the future. He begins to see that he must take the best of himself, that those mighty thews and immense limbs were not given him for nothing, that he can take delight in displaying them to countless of his fellow-creatures, less well-furnished, in spite of the agonies and miseries which they caused him in old time.

From these, "quaint, crumpled-up, unsignifiedalian objects," he is forever removed by the girth of his huge trunk, the monstrous rounds of his limbs. Let them pursue *their* petty little occupations, *his* is to stand, aloof and immense, admired of all; shamed and yet shameless; where the great arc-lights whitely illuminate him and the voices of thousands shout.

Their world is not his world; but never let him mind, for the "Tickler" had introduced him to a new one. There was no place for him while *they* still tried to claim him; no rest for him until *they* cast him out. Soon the great folding-doors will shut behind him; bar out the jostling, fretful, harsh, ignorant pigmies who have surrounded him hitherto; hide him in great cool chambers where his retreat shall be majestic and inviolate, whence occasionally he shall issue forth.

.

And now already on every hoarding through the vast

metropolis, London, posters ten or fifteen feet high have been plastered by the "Tickler's" advertising craft. Huge, copper-topped, and proud our *gigas* figures, clad in kilts and a bonnet, and carrying in one shoulder-of-mutton hand a fir-tree uprooted. The other touches his bonnet in salute. Behind him rise the great twin peaks, delineated, of More and Moich, and underneath him is written:

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